



General Assembly

Fifty-second Session

15th plenary meeting

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New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Udovenko (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 120 (continued)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/52/350/Add.1)

The President: In a letter contained in document A/52/350/Add.1, the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communication dated 16 September 1997, the Republic of Moldova has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 9 (continued)

General debate

Address by His Excellency The Honourable Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Information of Saint Kitts and Nevis

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Information of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

The Honourable Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Information of Saint Kitts and Nevis, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Honourable Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Information of Saint Kitts and Nevis and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Douglas (Saint Kitts and Nevis): The fifty-second anniversary of the United Nations is yet another historic moment for us all. Our shared presence here is evidence that as Members of this great institution we have an opportunity to realize our collective aspirations and expectations. It is necessary therefore for the Organization to ensure that the concerns of Member States, particularly those in the developing world, are not compromised or seen as secondary to the process.

It is essential that the United Nations become a catalyst for improving the quality of life of our citizens and a champion of our fundamental rights and freedoms. Such challenges will require much commitment and strategic thinking. I believe that if we succeed we will have laid the foundation for peace and international security for generations to come.

With our nations and peoples standing at the crossroads of tremendous change, and with heightened



expectations in the fields of human development and poverty eradication, the United Nations must be allowed to assume an even greater role. Saint Kitts and Nevis maintains that the United Nations has the necessary institutional capacity to encompass our collective ambitions and simultaneously to resolve many of the problems facing nation-States.

In the light of the fundamental importance which my Government attaches to a reformed, more functional United Nations, we welcome the appointment of His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan as Secretary-General. His commitment to and wide experience in this institution will help provide the United Nations with the crucial leadership it needs at this critical juncture in the Organization's history.

As we march into a new millennium, with its increasing uncertainties and complexities, the United Nations and its membership will have to recommit themselves to human development in all its facets. Otherwise we will have failed in this decade to accomplish our mandate of poverty eradication.

The growing reduction in much-needed aid and technical assistance to the developing world threatens the further marginalization of our poor countries. This means that countries will grow to depend more on the United Nations. We therefore urge the United Nations to work more closely with developing countries to devise new ideas and pragmatic approaches to improve the standard of living of the world's poor. This reality, we think, lends greater urgency to the Secretary-General's proposals for reform. In this regard, the Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis encourages wide discussion of the extensive and far-reaching reform proposals with the aim of arriving at consensus.

We believe that it is vital to restructure and consolidate some of the different areas of services that the United Nations provides. However this must herald real change and increased benefit for Member States. We cannot support a mere transfer of resources from one organ to another without proper safeguards to ensure efficiency and accountability. In the same vein, we hope that development reforms will not sacrifice the effectiveness and distinctiveness of existing organs. In order for the developing world to achieve sustainable growth, we need the expertise, we need the resources and we need the institutional capabilities of existing United Nations funds and programmes.

As we work towards greater efficiency in the management and administration of services, it is important not to undermine positive past achievements. Member States must refrain from marrying conditionalities to the process of reform, especially when these very conditionalities hinder substantial progress in the reform process itself. Saint Kitts and Nevis therefore suggests that in order for reforms to work they must of necessity balance and protect the interests of Member States, not simply appear to reward or benefit a privileged few. Reform is not about creating mechanisms that merely restructure the obligations of States to the Organization. Reform should not be used as an opportunity to compensate current economic strength. Decisions on permanent and non-permanent membership, as part of the reform process, should be the result of a process of debate and consensus-building.

My delegation expects to see greater emphasis on geographic representation and on correcting old inequalities that continue to plague us today. Saint Kitts and Nevis appeals to all States to be careful not to confuse the need for genuine systemic reforms with legally assessed financial obligations to the Organization. Nations demanding reform should also be willing to reform incongruous attitudes and perceptions of the United Nations. We must honour all our responsibilities to the Organization. Progress will require that we all work more closely together to confront the multitude of complicated problems, old and new.

To this end, let us challenge ourselves to find common ground and assist the United Nations in developing the appropriate ideas and strategies that promote our common agenda. This may not be easy; hence the Organization will need to establish a mutually beneficial relationship between policy makers in Government and the business community.

On this note, I should like to acknowledge the magnificent contribution of Mr. Ted Turner to this Organization. He has shown himself to be an exceptional international citizen. We trust that this humanitarian gesture of support for the Organization and its work will make a noticeable impact on the areas designated, and that it will challenge others of like mind to demonstrate their support for the Organization as well.

This show of support is a reminder that only the United Nations can provide the kind of impartial and comprehensive leadership that Member States want. Only the United Nations, with 50 years of successes and

failures as a world institution, has the unique experience to develop essential capabilities to serve its membership. The United Nations has the competitive edge. A United Nations reformed to deal with the modern challenges of a modern era can work, but only if it is allowed to work.

I appreciate well the power of national imperatives and individualism. I also understand well the concerns about supranational institutions. Nevertheless, we have come too far to surrender our global destiny to fear and misconceptions.

When we speak of the development of the human person yet fail to appreciate that economic rights are as fundamental to human dignity as are human rights, we do great disservice to the cause of human rights. However, when we acknowledge these rights then we give more substance to social stability and the process of true democracy.

Democracy is not new to the Caribbean region. It is a way of life, a tradition for our region. We see it as the most practical and useful system of government to advance our people. However, democracy is not simply about institutions or processes. It is about creating an enabling government and an enabling environment in which the ordinary person — the impoverished, the disillusioned, the educated and the rich — feels included and feels that he or she can participate in the decision-making process and feels that his or her dreams can be truly realized.

Because we regard democracy as the most efficient and viable vehicle for sustainable human development, it must deliver and be seen to deliver. The people must be reassured that they can and indeed will rise from the quicksand of poverty through the promise of development. If we fail to deliver on the promise, then democracy will fail. If democracy fails, poverty becomes entrenched and chaos becomes inevitable.

The condition of poverty has for too long been linked with the destiny of small States. The apparent ease with which both are dismissed is a source of grave concern to the Government and the people of Saint Kitts and Nevis. Too little attention is being paid to the economic hardships, political disruptions and social dislocations which we are forced to endure as small developing States. Instead of seeing crucial support from the developed world, we are witnessing increased tendencies towards isolationism and neglect.

In the current wave of globalization, economic stability has become the soft underbelly of Caribbean security, democracy and prospects for sustainable development. If these economies are not strengthened and given appropriate assistance, one lays waste to the tremendous intellectual talents in these countries and exposes the political and social fabric to the nefarious forces that lurk in the region.

Our small countries need institutional support and partnership to help in preparing our youth to adapt their knowledge and skills to changing world circumstances. Such preparation will help make them self-sufficient and more responsive to the unpredictable changes taking place around us.

Additionally, we must create jobs on a continuous basis to inspire our young people and put life's basic needs within reach of their parents. We must not overlook the crucial link between economic growth and long-term political and social stability. Sustainable development in the Caribbean is in everyone's best interest.

My Government does not subscribe to conspiracy theories, but it is acutely aware of the ease with which we can all fall victim to the conspiracy of silence and the conspiracy of neglect. Our economies are under siege; our way of life is threatened; the growth of our countries and people is undermined by forces which are better able to exploit globalization and trade liberalization.

No one in good faith can accuse us of complacency. Our countries have worked hard to keep pace with current economic trends. We have tightened fiscal and monetary policies, and we are monitoring them very closely. We have run the gauntlet of social and economic measures supposedly structured to ensure the economic growth and survival of our various economies.

The road we have travelled has been a difficult one, and we have learned valuable lessons. Still, we continue to suffer exclusion from developed countries' markets for our various products. As a direct consequence, the private sector has become sceptical of its very survival and profitability.

Our banana-producing countries in the region have suffered a tremendous and potentially devastating blow in the wake of the recent panel ruling of the World Trade Organization (WTO) on the banana regime of the African, Caribbean and Pacific group of States (ACP). It is

inconceivable that the insignificant but important percentage in access that ACP countries share in this market can pose any meaningful threat to the collaborative interests of multinational producers.

Our banana and sugar industries are major employers and foreign exchange earners; yet, without regard for our survival, they are being challenged with the ultimate objective of dismantling them completely. At the same time, we still do not have ready access to essential technologies vital to making our industries and human resources more competitive and more efficient.

We contend that trade liberalization, without the proper mechanisms to protect the small and the weak, does not promote fair trade. Where is the fairness of fair trade? How, therefore, will our small island developing States find new and sustainable ways to respond to the growing needs of our population? How will we be able to stem the brain drain, the migration of human resources searching for a better standard of living?

Our countries have undertaken to diversify our economies despite the obvious dislocations within our societies. We remain committed to democratic institutions, and we continuously allocate scarce resources to human development. Our Governments in the Caribbean have been working more closely with the private sector as true partners in development. We have enacted legislation to facilitate increased investment opportunities and to encourage foreign direct investment and domestic savings.

Nonetheless, with every step we seem to fall prey to the perpetual and constantly evolving demands for more extensive changes without any regard for the effects on our countries and our people. Globalization, with its insatiable appetite, and the ravenous forces of unrestricted free market and trade liberalization are forever famished. Why must the rules which are always in a state of constant flux be to the detriment of small resource-poor States?

In the coming years, not only will we still be struggling to combat poverty, but the concepts of sovereignty and governance will also be seriously challenged as we endeavour to cope with the complex implications of forces that face our societies and menace our democracies. The transnational nature of information, of capital, of labour and of technological advances will not spare our tiny countries the trying consequences unleashed by globalization.

Despite these difficulties, Saint Kitts and Nevis will not become a nation of mendicants. We will give priority to the right of our citizens to economic well-being. For what good would it do if our people achieve their human right to exist but are denied the right to live dignified lives?

The Labour Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis has undertaken to build 1,000 new, affordable homes by the end of this century. We believe that all our citizens have the right to live in dignity and to have access to the basic necessities of life. We have already turned over 100 new houses, and by the end of this year we expect 300 families to be moving into new homes in Saint Kitts and Nevis. This is the commitment of the Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis to the development of its citizens.

I have said in the past, and I maintain now, that we must abandon the practice of using gross national product per capita to measure standards of living for people in the developing world. How can the developed world and multilateral agencies deny assistance to countries on the basis that such a country has reached this artificial threshold? Are people in the developing world not entitled to a higher standard of living, or must they always straddle the boundaries of poverty and exist only at levels which the developed world considers acceptable indicators of human progress?

It is important for us to dedicate our energies to the logic of prevention. In Saint Kitts and Nevis we believe strongly that prevention is better than cure. We believe in enabling our peoples to have a life free of poverty and despair. The Secretary-General has called for greater efficiency in management, greater resource mobilization and redeployment of potential savings to the development fields. This is long overdue.

It is also the duty of Member States to ensure that new resources are targeted at development. Such a process will have to be guided by and nourished with vision, political will and an appreciation of the global imperatives of sustainable development and poverty eradication. It will involve foresight, profound analyses, and a willingness to look beyond national self-interest. Working together to shape our collective destiny could enable us to reduce the risks of future political and social conflicts.

I believe firmly that the special circumstances and vulnerability indices of small States must be at the forefront of international debate. If there were ever a

question as to the vulnerability of small States, I challenge the Assembly to recall the unfortunate situation on the Caribbean island of Montserrat. This reality clearly demonstrates that it takes only one disaster, only one violent act of nature, only one volcanic eruption to dislocate an entire population, decimate an entire economy and destroy the entire social fabric of a people. The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis, like other Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries, has extended a willing hand of health and social support to the people of Montserrat. We continue to provide employment and other business opportunities to those who have come to our shores in Saint Kitts and Nevis from the island of Montserrat. I urge the international community to join the Caribbean in taking prompt, decisive and tangible steps to assist the people of Montserrat.

Montserrat is a microcosm of our precarious existence. Hence, we urge the international community to fulfil its promises under the Barbados Programme of Action and other commitments to the developing world. Our survival as a region is intimately interwoven with our environment, and our physical and economic limitations should not be further burdened by the transshipment of hazardous waste through our waterways. Such actions are a flagrant violation of our human rights and an affront to our sovereign dignity.

As we work to fulfil the dreams of those who came before us, I trust that we will succeed in developing confidence in the capabilities of the United Nations and entrust it with realizing our common objectives. At the same time, there will be occasions when we must challenge ourselves to appreciate that some problems in international affairs require indigenous approaches and remedies. We must, therefore, yield to such imperatives.

One case in point is the Middle East, where the current crisis calls for a nurturing of mutual trust and a clear willingness to understand the need for all the parties to come to the bargaining table. Saint Kitts and Nevis believes that durable peace and security are the common desires of the nations involved. Success requires boldness and commitment. Genuine progress will come not from violence, recrimination and mistrust, but through partnership and dialogue. Saint Kitts and Nevis urges both sides to use negotiation and creative confidence-building measures in addressing their differences.

Saint Kitts and Nevis also urges the Chinese people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait to commit their collective energies to the pursuit of common approaches to resolving

the current impasse that divides them. The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis maintains that progress on this issue requires sustained dialogue, political will and the goodwill of all. We also believe that the remarkable strides the Chinese people on Taiwan have made in the last two decades should not be squandered. The international community can benefit, and stands to benefit significantly, from the economic, technological and social advances of Taiwan.

In conclusion, fulfilling the expectations of our citizens is not a simple task, but we cannot and must not become discouraged. I hope, therefore, that as we endeavour to accomplish our goals Member States will not continue to make unreasonable demands on this Organization while refusing it the requisite tools and resources for appropriate action. Our world needs a stronger United Nations. Our countries and our peoples need its intellectual supervision and potential for impartiality. Let us not try to relegate it to the periphery, lest we risk serious consequences in the future. Let us commit to writing a history of which we can be proud, lest history should hold us in contempt for squandering our children's heritage. Let this session of the General Assembly be a watershed when collective efforts were translated into appropriate action and well-deserved results.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Information of Saint Kitts and Nevis for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Information of Saint Kitts and Nevis, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Chong Ha Yoo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Yoo (Republic of Korea): I congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the presidency of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly and pledge to you our full support and cooperation. I also pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, whose devoted efforts enabled the fifty-first session of the General Assembly to come to grips with some of the core issues affecting the future of the United Nations.

We meet at a time when a number of profound questions loom large over humankind. Does the international community possess the necessary will and means to make the twenty-first century an era of wider peace, deeper justice and greater prosperity? Can we eradicate poverty and protect the environment? Are we able to ensure that fundamental human rights are respected and promoted throughout the world? Can we reinvigorate the United Nations so that it can be the means to advance these ends? To each of these questions we can and must respond in the affirmative.

The Secretary-General, through his recent reform proposals, has provided the international community with a timely compass to help guide the way. In the view of my delegation, the Secretary-General's latest proposals contain a wide spectrum of reforms designed for the overall enhancement of the United Nations system. We are confident that many of the Secretary-General's ideas can be translated into action through open-minded deliberation, with the full participation of Member States at this session. In this respect, I wish to recall the statement of 10 August by the Group of 16, including the Republic of Korea, which expressed support for the Secretary-General's reform initiatives.

While institutional reform is a prerequisite for a more efficient United Nations, it is clear that without more reliable financial support the Organization cannot make an efficient transition into the twenty-first century. Only when Member States discharge their financial obligations in full, on time and without conditions will the United Nations safely and smoothly reach its ultimate destination of ensuring a better future for humankind.

It is in this spirit that Korea has made it a firm policy to pay its assessed dues in full and on time. We will actively participate in concerted efforts to adopt a more equitable scale of assessment at this session. My Government will consider a gradual move from the contributors' Group C to which Korea presently belongs, to Group B in terms of peacekeeping assessment. This is a reaffirmation of our enduring commitment towards both the financial viability of the United Nations and its efforts to maintain international peace and security.

Another crucial task before us is the reform of the Security Council. At the last session, my delegation actively participated in deliberations on the issue, on the basis of our own experiences as a Council member. We share the view that the profound changes in international relations over the past several decades fully warrant

expansion of Council membership. Given the diverse and sensitive concerns of all Member States, however, this issue must be handled with the utmost prudence and seriousness. Every effort should be made to work out a consensus formula, while bearing in mind that haste makes waste.

One of the most significant and promising developments in international relations over the past half century has been the emergence of a considerable number of medium-power countries with the capability to make a meaningful contribution to the cause of international peace and security. Any plan to reform the Council should provide those countries with opportunities to serve on the Council with reasonable frequency, commensurate with their capabilities and contributions.

We also believe that Council reform should be based upon consideration of the problems and shortcomings associated with the Council's operations thus far, particularly with respect to the system of permanent membership and the right of veto. Convinced that more can be done to make the Security Council a more representative, efficient and democratic body, we will remain open-minded and flexible with regard to any proposals that can move this important process in the right direction.

As a member of the Security Council for the 1996-1997 period, the Republic of Korea has made its due contribution to the cause of international peace and security. We have actively participated in reaching important decisions to enhance peace and stability in the countries of some parts of the third world that have been plagued by civil conflicts over the past several years. We also organized, during Korea's presidency of the Council last May, an open debate on the refugee issue. The debate resulted in the adoption of a presidential statement in June on protection for humanitarian assistance to refugees and others in conflict situations. This clearly reflects the fact that the Security Council has come to recognize that security applies to people as much as to States in an era of intra-State conflicts.

Despite many positive developments in the security landscape of the post Cold-War era, the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction remains a priority concern to people and Governments alike. My Government believes that universal adherence to the existing non-proliferation regimes represents an essential step towards realizing that common objective. In this regard, we welcome the entry into force of the Chemical

Weapons Convention, and urge those States which have not yet acceded to the Convention, including North Korea, to do so at the earliest date.

The proliferation and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines has been the cause of enormous human suffering and injury, particularly among civilians. Given the magnitude of the scourge of anti-personnel landmines, the Republic of Korea has decided to extend for an indefinite period its moratorium on the export of anti-personnel landmines, which was to expire at the end of this year. We believe, however, that each country's legitimate security concerns should be given due consideration in addressing this matter.

I wish to reiterate that, while we fully support the noble crusade to protect innocent civilians from anti-personnel landmines, a sweeping ban cannot be a satisfactory answer for a country like the Republic of Korea, which faces the real and present risk of a recurrence of all-out war, and whose heavily populated capital is only 25 miles from the military demarcation line. In our view, the draft convention adopted in Oslo two weeks ago does not fully accommodate concerns which we have consistently expressed, or the exceptional nature of the security situation on the Korean peninsula.

The international community has consistently endeavoured to wipe out all forms of terrorism from the face of the earth. However, terrorism still persists as one of the major threats to international peace, exacting a heavy toll on innocent lives. The Republic of Korea has experienced many barbaric and cowardly acts of terrorism and still lives under its constant threat, including recent open threats aimed at our free press. We strongly support international efforts to combat terrorism and underline the importance of upholding the principle of zero tolerance. Given the global spectrum of terrorism, we also believe that the United Nations can play a central role in strengthening the international anti-terrorism regime. In this regard, we look forward to an early adoption of the convention for the suppression of terrorist bombings.

In this era of interdependence among States, the international community cannot remain indifferent to the under-development of much of the world. My delegation therefore welcomes the adoption of the Agenda for Development at the previous session of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General's reform proposals designed to enhance the United Nations economic and social initiatives as well as its development activities. For that reason, we support the Secretary-General's suggestion

to enhance the coordinating role of the Economic and Social Council and to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions. We expect that the various proposals for a funding modality for United Nations development activities will be discussed fully at this session.

Korea, now a member of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, will participate more vigorously in South-South cooperation projects with a view to playing a bridging role between developed and developing countries. In an effort to expand assistance to the least developed countries, we have participated in bilateral cooperation projects with the Economic Commission for Africa since 1995, and we plan to undertake a programme for the development of Africa for the period 1998 to 2000.

My Government, jointly with the United Nations Development Programme, established in Seoul this past May the International Vaccine Institute. This Institute is devoted to the research and development of vaccines for children around the world, particularly those in developing countries. The inaugural meeting of its board of trustees is scheduled to convene in Seoul next month. We look forward to generous support from Member States for this worthy goal of keeping our children free from debilitating diseases.

Turning now to environmental issues, my Government welcomes the adoption of the Programme for Further Implementation of Agenda 21 at the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly and stands committed to participating faithfully in its implementation. In particular, we are pleased that Korea's proposal to conduct a feasibility study on the transfer of publicly owned technology was supported by developed and developing countries alike and was included in the Programme. The results of the feasibility study, which is being funded by my Government, will be presented at the sixth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development next April. Through these efforts, we hope to expedite the transfer of environmentally sound technologies and to promote international cooperation for environmental protection.

During the special session, there was also an in-depth discussion on the safe management of radioactive waste, an issue of serious concern to many countries. My Government attaches great importance to the fact that the special session adopted a comprehensive set of

arrangements on the environmentally sound management of these dangerous wastes. We strongly urge that these arrangements be firmly and strictly adhered to and respected.

With regard to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, we hope that a realistic and achievable outcome will emerge at the Kyoto Conference to be held in December this year.

Next year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption and proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In 1998, we are also to undertake the five-year mid-term review of the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted in June 1993.

In the view of my delegation, human rights is an area where the United Nations has made significant contributions over the past half century, not just as an international forum for discussion, but also as a centre for coordinated action. Seen from this perspective, the consolidation of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights, as proposed in the Secretary-General's report, should certainly inject new vitality into United Nations efforts to enhance the coordination of its activities in the area of human rights. I wholeheartedly welcome Mary Robinson's assumption of the post of High Commissioner.

My Government also welcomes the remarkable progress made by the Preparatory Committee on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court, which we believe will serve as an effective deterrent against violations of international humanitarian law. We expect that the forthcoming conference in Rome will adopt the statute of the court, paving the way for its establishment at the earliest possible date. From a historical perspective, the creation of a permanent international criminal court will set a benchmark for the attainment of international criminal justice in the coming century.

As rightly pointed out in the Secretary-General's report, the developments in the present decade have clearly strengthened the argument that respect for human rights is a precondition for political stability and socio-economic progress. One of the United Nations' most compelling responsibilities is to further promote universal respect for human rights and deter gross human rights abuses and political oppression. In this context, we are gravely concerned at the dire human rights situation in North Korea. We truly hope that, in the not-too-distant future,

our compatriots in the North will come to enjoy basic human rights and freedoms, as other peoples do around the world.

Let me now turn to the situation on the Korean Peninsula. In April last year, the Republic of Korea and the United States jointly proposed four-party talks, involving the South and the North of Korea, the United States and China, which aim to establish a permanent peace mechanism on the Korean Peninsula and build mutual trust between the two sides of Korea. The four-party talks, when realized, will offer rare chances of facilitating peace and security on the Korean Peninsula and throughout North-east Asia.

If inter-Korean relations are to move forward and the outstanding problems of the Peninsula are to be resolved peacefully, there is no alternative to dialogue and reconciliation between the South and the North of Korea. We sincerely hope that North Korea will realize the importance and value of improved inter-Korean relations through its participation in the four-party talks. While the talks are in the interest of all concerned, no one stands to benefit more than North Korea itself. The construction of a solid and durable peace structure on the Korean Peninsula will also produce generous dividends which can help North Korea in addressing a host of domestic challenges it faces, including its economic difficulties.

It is regrettable that the recent preparatory meetings for the four-party talks ended without any tangible result. Nevertheless, we will continue our patient effort to engage North Korea in a process of dialogue. We appreciate the continued support of the international community to this end.

In the meantime, the Republic of Korea will continue to provide humanitarian assistance to North Korea. The plight of innocent civilians in the North and, in particular, vulnerable groups such as malnourished children, is a matter of serious concern for the Government and people of the Republic of Korea. As a matter of priority, my Government will provide assistance to the vulnerable children in North Korea in close cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund and other interested countries. In this connection, we would like to stress the vital importance of transparency in the distribution process. We hope that such transparency can be enhanced through more effective monitoring by the international organizations concerned.

This year has seen some positive developments in international efforts to resolve the long-standing North Korean nuclear issue. The 1994 Geneva Agreed Framework has now entered the implementation stage, with the ground-breaking ceremony for the light-water reactor project in North Korea last month under the auspices of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO). For the first time in nearly five decades, over 100 engineers and technicians of both sides of Korea are working together on the construction site. We hope that this welcome development will be a harbinger of a new era in inter-Korean relations. My Government takes this opportunity to express its appreciation to all those countries which have extended generous financial contributions to KEDO.

While the ongoing light-water reactor project undertaken by KEDO is an important step forward in eliminating the threat of nuclear proliferation in the Korean peninsula, it must be emphasized here once again that the ultimate resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue is possible only when North Korea complies fully with its safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency, as well as with the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula signed by the South and North Korea in 1991.

When the United Nations was founded in 1945, who could have foreseen the extent to which international relations would develop during the next half-century? No doubt, a number of geopolitical structural changes will occur in the coming century as well.

At the threshold of the twenty-first century, this session of the General Assembly could well prove to be a turning point by providing a forum for reconfiguring the architecture and priorities of the Organization. Facing a new array of challenges, this session should point the way towards a brighter future and a renewed sense of optimism. Together, we can forge a stronger United Nations and, through it, the foundation for a century of peace, prosperity and justice. The Republic of Korea stands ready to do its due part.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Singapore, His Excellency Mr. S. Jayakumar.

Mr. Jayakumar (Singapore): Let me congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. I also thank our outgoing President, Mr. Razali Ismail, for his untiring

efforts. He catalysed a change in our approach to Security Council reform and set a new trajectory for it.

For several years, we have all recognized the imperative of United Nations reform. Today, the issue of the moment is still reform. This summer, the Secretary-General challenged us with a package of reforms that he accurately described as the most extensive and far-reaching in the 52-year history of this Organization. This is, of course, not the first time a Secretary-General has attempted to remake this Organization. But now that the more extravagant of post-cold-war hopes for the United Nations have faded, I believe that this package represents a more focused, realistic and practical approach. We congratulate the Secretary-General for his initiative.

The Secretary-General's objective clearly is to enable the United Nations to do better what we all require it to do. We all take the United Nations importance as axiomatic. Therefore, his intention to reconfigure the United Nations management and strengthen the United Nations ability to perform its core functions should be generally acceptable to the majority, even if every particular element of his proposals has not been fully elaborated or may not be entirely to everyone's taste.

In the larger interests of this Organization, we should all welcome the thrust of the Secretary-General's proposals and not take issue with too many details. Singapore adopts such an approach. We have, for example, questions about some specific details of his proposals to place the United Nations finances on a sounder footing and to streamline its operations. But we have nonetheless contributed actively to the effort to streamline budgetary and administrative procedures in the Secretariat and will continue to do so.

By taking a pragmatic and eclectic approach, we hope to help move the reform process forward, even if we may have questions on specific aspects. We will continue to work with the Secretary-General and other Member States to make the United Nations a more efficient and effective Organization — one that will serve the interests of all its Members, big and small, developing as well as industrialized.

The Secretary-General's proposals on the United Nations management, administration and structure have sometimes been directly or indirectly linked to the ongoing effort by Member States to prepare the United Nations political leadership for the twenty-first century

through Security Council reform. We are not confident that this is the correct approach. We have been engaged in this broader effort for almost four years. It is a fact that the process has been difficult. Progress has been slow. We have reached the conclusion that the prospects for further progress are not good.

We have arrived at this conclusion with great reluctance and without rancour. Progress has not been slow because of the ill will of one State or another. Prospects for further progress are dim not merely because one country or another has lacked the will to cut through the web of vested interests. The reasons are more fundamental. They go beyond the volitions and intentions of individual countries and are embedded in the nature and inescapable realities of international organization in an international system that is still largely defined by relations between sovereign States.

No great Power, or even a Power with aspirations to greatness, has ever been willing to submit its own vital interests to United Nations jurisdiction. This fact of international life underlies the current reform stalemate. The necessity of United Nations reform may be widely accepted. But what the great Powers want is not a strong United Nations *per se*. They want a United Nations just strong and credible enough to serve as an effective instrument of their will and policies. It is only small countries that are more inclined to take the United Nations on its own terms and in its own right. Small countries are not necessarily more virtuous — we merely have fewer options.

This reality has been underscored by our discussions on Security Council reform. The really crucial decisions that will allow Security Council reform to move decisively forward or stall it indefinitely are going to be taken in Washington, London, Paris, Beijing or Moscow. It has not been clear that the current permanent members really want change except on their own terms and in circumstances that will not erode their current status and prerogatives. Critical ambiguities in their positions have held up progress and will continue to do so unless clarified.

One school of thought is that we should decide on Security Council reform during this General Assembly. I can well sympathize with the frustrations of those who feel that the current debate is going nowhere. But precisely because this is so, we need to ask: What is it that we are going to decide upon? The answer is far from clear. Indeed, the entire Security Council reform process is in danger of being lost in a wilderness of logical

contradictions and ambiguities. Please permit me to spell out some of these contradictions and ambiguities.

Several permanent members have been categorical only in their desire to see Japan and Germany as new permanent members. Many other countries, including my own, would agree that, when general agreement is reached on the expansion of the Security Council, Japan and Germany should be new permanent members. But an equally large number of countries, and I believe Japan and Germany are among them, would also agree that any general agreement on expansion must include some developing countries as new permanent members to reflect new international realities.

On this point most permanent members have been far less clear. When challenged, several of them have recently for the first time conceded that in addition to Japan and Germany they would in principle be willing to accept three permanent seats for developing nations from the regions of Africa, Asia and Latin America. This is welcome progress. Nevertheless, important ambiguities still remain.

How will the three developing countries be chosen? It has been suggested that individual countries be chosen by a two-thirds vote of the membership as a whole. It has also been suggested that they could be subject to some system of rotation within the regions.

Both, however, are problematic concepts. Can a country really legitimately represent a region if it is chosen outside the region? Will the two-thirds membership prescribed by the Charter really be sufficiently familiar with conditions outside their own respective regions to make an informed and legitimate choice, binding on regions of which they are not members? Then, conceptually, is it not inherently contradictory for a member to be said to be permanent but nonetheless be subject to rotation? Who will such a member represent: its own national interests or the region's interests? Can it really represent the latter? Indeed, what is the regional interest? How will it be determined? Is the regional interest necessarily synonymous with the interests of the larger members of a region? Can a rotational system work for any region except Africa, where it is already an established principle?

None of these questions will be easy to answer. They have been debated for the last three years without satisfactory answers. But unless there are clear answers,

my concern is that suggestions for a differentiated selection process for permanent members from among the newly industrialized and newly developing countries will only lead to permanent stress, divisions and conflict for most regions, or it will lead to a two-stage decision-making process where the elevation of Germany and Japan will not for many years, if ever, be matched by any degree of consensus for the developing nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Such a discriminatory situation would be clearly unacceptable to a majority of Member States, including many of those that aspire to permanent status.

But even if we could simultaneously reach agreement on the identity of the three permanent members from among the developing countries, together with Japan and Germany, there are further complexities of equal importance. What will be the status of the new permanent members?

Even those current permanent members that have strongly supported Germany's and Japan's aspirations have been silent on whether Germany and Japan should have the veto. Even treaty allies of Japan and Germany, countries that have pledged to go to war at their side and for them, have taken no position on this crucial question. This, in our view, makes it even more difficult to believe that any developed country permanent member would ever allow any developing country to acquire the veto, even though they have made it clear that they want to retain unrestricted use of the veto for themselves.

The powers of new permanent members are not questions that can be deferred to a later date merely to make it easier to quickly determine the identity of the new permanent members. They are intrinsic to the very notion and definition of permanent membership. Is a new permanent member really a permanent member if it does not have the same powers as the original five permanent members?

Article 27 has been controversial from the very founding of the United Nations. There is now a wide consensus that the use of the veto should be curtailed with a view to its eventual abolition. The reality, of course, is that this is not going to happen any time soon. Any attempt to curtail the veto will be vetoed. Undemocratic though it may be, the veto will be with us for the foreseeable future. And it is not without a certain utility in so far as it helps prevent conflicts among the major Powers which could undermine the United Nations. It has been argued that the veto acts as a fail-safe mechanism. The veto will prevent those countries that are so essential to the maintenance of

peace and security and to the operation of the United Nations that they deserve permanent status from being compelled to take any action that would lead to conflicts among themselves.

Now, if this justification for the retention of the veto by the original five permanent members has any validity, then the question that arises is whether any new permanent member that is not given the veto is really deserving of that status? Would such countries really enjoy the international stature and the capability and clout to make such a crucial contribution to international peace and security as to warrant being given permanent status? And if not, why give them permanent status? Could they not make financial and other contributions to the United Nations in some other, way as many countries with no such aspirations already do? If there is a need for new permanent members, and I believe there is a need, then the veto is not a question that can be postponed or discussed separately from the issue of their identities.

Three out of the five current permanent members have also been adamantly opposed to the expansion of the Security Council beyond a total of 20 or 21 members. This effectively blocks any expansion of the Security Council.

Let us suppose that agreement is reached on the identity of the five new permanent members: Japan and Germany and three from the developing countries, whichever they may be. But if the current permanent members that argue against an expansion of the Security Council beyond 21 members remain firm in their position, this would mean only one additional non-permanent seat for the 165 remaining members of the United Nations, all of which have a desire and a right to serve the United Nations on the Security Council at least occasionally. This inequitable arrangement would certainly be rejected by the majority. Moreover, creating five new permanent members in a Security Council of 21 will seriously upset the present balance between permanent seats and non-permanent seats. This is also a situation which will not be acceptable to the majority of the Member States. It will certainly not command the support of the two thirds of the membership required by the Charter to effect any change to the Security Council's present composition.

Those that have argued for an expansion of the Security Council to no more than 21 members have done so on the grounds that this is the maximum number that can function effectively and efficiently. These are

concerns that we should all share. Nobody wants an ineffective or inefficient Security Council. But no one has yet made a convincing argument that a Security Council of, say, 26 members, as has been proposed by the Non-Aligned Movement, would be any less efficient or effective than a Security Council of 21. This is of course assuming that effectiveness and efficiency are not narrowly defined as merely making it more difficult for any of the current permanent members and their allies to ensure that nobody can prevent them from having their own way.

In any case, can we really decide on the effectiveness and efficiency of an expanded Security Council before we know what the powers of the new permanent members are going to be? This leads us into a tautological situation. We cannot know how an expanded Security Council consisting of an expanded number of permanent members will operate because, as I argued a moment ago, the definition of what constitutes a new permanent member cannot be separated from the question of the veto. And the current permanent members have refused to pronounce on this. At this point, effectiveness and efficiency as an argument against a Security Council of more than 21 breaks down completely.

I could go on with my analysis. But I hope I have demonstrated that several critical aspects of the positions of the major countries on Security Council reform need further clarification before progress can be made. I do not believe that the ambiguities and contradictions are going to be resolved soon. They are the natural consequence of sovereign States pursuing their national interests.

The position of permanent members will have a decisive influence on whether or not Security Council reform moves forward. As things presently stand, it seems clear that what will not evoke a veto from any of the current permanent members will not command the support of the two-thirds membership required to make the necessary Charter changes. At the same time, what would attract the support of the vast majority of United Nations Members is more likely than not to provoke a veto. This is where, like it or not, we currently stand.

A similar case could be made on the closely related question of financial reform. This too, has its own deep complexities; its own intrinsic contradictions between what would be acceptable to the majority and what the major Powers want. Not every change is necessarily for the better. We should therefore make progress cautiously, especially on such fundamental questions. This is why the Non-Aligned Movement has wisely decided that efforts at

restructuring the Security Council should not be subject to any imposed time-frame.

Of course, there has been an evolution in the positions of the major Powers over the last four years. There will be further positive changes over time. But it will certainly take time. No country readily changes the status quo if it benefits from the status quo.

My point is therefore that, given this reality, it would be a historic mistake to artificially link the Secretary-General's managerial, administrative and structural reforms to far more contentious questions of Security Council or other matters that would require the support of the two-thirds membership needed to effect Charter amendments as defined in Article 108. There is no need to handicap ourselves in this way. Not all aspects of the Secretary-General's proposals are equally acceptable to all Members. But, taken as a whole, it will be far easier to reach a general agreement on more aspects of the Secretary-General's proposals if they are considered in themselves and not linked to more politicized and therefore more intractable questions.

This is not to say that Security Council or financial reforms are unimportant. Of course, they are important. We should continue to work on them. The issues I have raised are complex. But there is no avoiding them. I remain confident that with patience and sincerity we will eventually find our way out of the thickets of ambiguity into which we have wandered. I am confident that we will eventually succeed in our common endeavour to enhance the ability of the Security Council to exercise leadership in the management of global affairs and enhance its legitimacy to do so.

But this is only one facet of United Nations reform. The Security Council is not necessarily the only United Nations body that is important, nor even always the most important. The Security Council is empowered to act on behalf of the membership as a whole on questions of international peace and security. It has no direct mandate to act on behalf of the membership as a whole on many other urgent international questions. International peace and security are no longer the only definition of high international politics. Development and the environment are two areas that are obvious and of increasing importance. Such issues in which the Security Council is not the lead United Nations body have risen in prominence on the post-cold-war international agenda. They will remain high priorities for the majority. There

can be no legitimate leadership role for the United Nations that does not deal with such issues.

Herein lies the critical importance of the Secretary-General's proposals. They can make an immediate and tangible difference to issues affecting the entire international community which are beyond the scope of the Security Council. Action on the Secretary-General's proposals, therefore, should not have to await general agreement on Security Council reform. By focusing on his proposals, by subjecting them to a thorough and positive discussion, I believe we can move urgently needed United Nations reforms forward at a faster pace than has hitherto characterized the reform process. And we can still remain seized of, but not hostage to, issues that may take more time to command general agreement or that require Charter amendment.

The President: I now call on Mr. Amre Moussa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt.

Mr. Moussa (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Mr. President, to you and your friendly country, I am pleased to extend my warmest congratulations on your election to the presidency of this session of the General Assembly. Your expertise on United Nations and world issues will undoubtedly assist you in wisely discharging the work of the General Assembly.

At the same time, I wish to express our appreciation to your predecessor for the efforts he exerted in connection with the discussions relating to United Nations reform.

The world is currently passing through highly interwoven and complicated circumstances, where progress and its horizons mingle with backwardness and its dangers while humanity takes pride in such achievements as economic progress and the development of technology and informatics, it is still suffering from the practices of terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime, the spread of corruption, the overflow of refugees, the challenges posed by war criminals, crimes of genocide and mass murder, and the negative effects of racism and religious discrimination.

All this gives rise to a situation which requires the international community to cooperate and become interdependent in its endeavours in a manner that helps it live in security and to progress confidently. This cannot take place unless the United Nations become the focal point and the centre of its concerted actions.

This prompts us to accord priority in Egypt's statement to this session to the issue of United Nations reform. The outcome of this session, and probably subsequent sessions will constitute a true litmus test of the credibility of determination and the objectivity of resolve regarding the present and the future of the United Nations.

Evolution of the United Nations relies on a number of facts and requisites. The principles of democratization and multilateralism are widespread, market economy mechanisms are growing, and scientific progress and information technology are accelerating. This necessitates reaching agreement on and drafting new rules for international conduct.

It has been shown that the end of the cold war in no way sufficiently guarantees the non-eruption of conflicts, tragedies and wars. By the same token, the risks emanating from the outbreak of rampant international confrontations have not disappeared. The root causes of national and international disputes still persist. On the other hand, weapons of mass destruction are readily available and are even on the rise. In addition to the absence of any substantial progress in the field of nuclear disarmament, there exist clandestine military nuclear programmes not subject to any international supervision in strategically sensitive areas such as the Middle East region.

While globalization is a rapidly growing phenomenon, and given its impact on the security and prosperity of various societies, national legislation and regulations are finding it difficult to cope with this phenomenon and to regulate international relations accordingly. Most of the developing countries do not possess the same capacity as the developed ones to speedily effect the necessary psychological, cultural and legislative adjustments. Therefore, the United Nations represents the proper mechanism for the formulation of an international consensus on the rules governing all these developments, and the provision of necessary assistance to the developing countries to meet and regulate their requirements.

Mr. Karaha (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Vice-President, took the Chair.

While we agree on the need to change the United Nations and increase its effectiveness, we might not be as agreed on the means to achieve that objective. In this context, I wish to state Egypt's view of the main

principles and points on which the United Nations reform process should be based, in addition to a preliminary comment on some of the Secretary-General's recent proposals in this respect.

It is important that the United Nations reform take place in conformity with the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter and the mandates accorded to each of the United Nations principal organs. The General Assembly, representing the general membership of the United Nations, has to adopt clear decisions which reflect the general consensus with regard to the proposals contained in the Secretary-General's report. Such consensus should be built through serious intergovernmental dialogue characterized by maximum transparency and sense of responsibility.

We concur with the Secretary-General's position that reforming the United Nations administrative machinery is not a substitute for the political will of the Member States to enhance the role of the Organization. Thus, the first step towards reform is the formation of a clear collective will to strengthen the United Nations system through a comprehensive approach in the interest of all.

While we would generally welcome merging departments with similar activities as well as slashing a number of posts if the General Assembly so decides, we wish to stress that rationalizing expenditures must not be done at the expense of efficient performance. Administrative reform should not diminish the Organization's capacity to fully implement the programmes adopted by the Member States. Nor should it adversely affect the equitable geographic distribution in the composition of the Secretariat.

We are also in agreement with the Secretary-General's diagnosis of the real threat facing the United Nations, namely the non-payment by some major Powers of their assessed contributions, be they to the regular budget or to the budget of peacekeeping operations. Since these arrears are part of the Member States' obligations under the Charter, their payment should be made in full, immediately and without conditions. Any attempt to make payment conditional will only complicate the entire reform process.

The sharp and steady decline in the resources allocated to development, coupled with the absence of enthusiasm on the part of some for the fulfilment of their obligations, have negatively affected the implementation of many programmes adopted by Member States. This impels us to review the funding modalities of the United Nations

operational activities for development so as to ensure their effective performance.

We concur with the Secretary-General on the importance of achieving the system-wide integration of United Nations programmes that deal with development. We still look forward to hearing concrete ideas on how to achieve more comprehensive coordination throughout the United Nations system as well as on how to decentralize the working methods of the regional economic commissions. These commissions play a cardinal role in implementing the Organization's priorities, such as poverty eradication.

Lastly, some of the other measures proposed by the Secretary-General, particularly those relating to how to address the financial crisis, should be studied further with a view to reaching arrangements which would enjoy general consensus and help overcome this crisis.

Therefore, we invite the General Assembly to study the important proposals made by the Secretary-General. The Assembly should then come up with recommendations that clarify the Member States' aspirations and the modalities of implementing their specified priorities in the medium-term plan, together with means of promoting the vital role of the Organization in the coming decades.

In the course of reforming the United Nations, the Secretary-General touched upon the elaboration of a new concept and structure of the Trusteeship Council. This is a matter that requires extensive discussion and study to clarify the impact and dimensions of the proposed concept, as it is totally different from the current mandate of the Council. Besides, it is imperative to discuss the significance of, and the need to put under collective trusteeship, topics set forth by the world community in well-established international agreements that express the will of the international community as a whole. Under those agreements, mechanisms and organs have already been set up to oversee their implementation.

Also, within the context of changing the role of the Organization, we note that the Secretary-General's proposals entrust the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights with many additional responsibilities and competencies at the expense of the functions entrusted to the Centre for Human Rights. In our view, this is not in line with what is important in the management of the human rights field. Here we recall some recent sagacious appeals for updating the approach

and legislation of the international community in the field of human rights in order to better reflect the diverse contributions of various cultures and civilizations in our contemporary world to the promotion and enrichment of these rights and the protection of the freedom of individuals and societies. Although some political considerations stood in the way of including the valuable contributions of some of those cultures and civilizations in the main human rights instruments — foremost among which is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — these sagacious appeals reflect the desire to enhance the contribution of various world cultures in the protection of human rights. Such enhanced and diverse contributions, in the framework of a world consensus, could spare the international community any accusation of negligence, double standards or bias towards a single cultural concept.

In the field of disarmament, I should point out that for 50 years, the United Nations has given due regard to disarmament issues. It has given high priority to matters relating to weapons of mass destruction in general and nuclear weapons in particular. A consensus on this high priority emerged in the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and has been reiterated ever since. Egypt remains faithful to this high priority.

I now turn to the Security Council. Past Assembly sessions, especially the fifty-first, witnessed protracted debates on the reform and restructuring of the Security Council. Undoubtedly, reaching agreement on this issue is one of the main pillars on which reform of the United Nations must be built.

In this regard, Egypt reiterates its emphasis on and commitment to the key principles adopted at the ministerial meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in New Delhi, as well as the elements adopted by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Summit in Harare in connection with the Council's enlargement and the need for full conformity with the relevant provisions of the Charter.

Therefore, first, there should be no partial or selective expansion or enlargement of the membership of the Security Council. Secondly, efforts at restructuring the Council should not be subject to any imposed time-frame. While recognizing the importance of treating this issue as a matter of urgent attention, no effort should be made to decide this issue before general agreement is reached. Thirdly, efforts should be made to rationalize the exercise of the veto. Fourthly, the improvement of the working methods of the Council should be given equal importance. Fifthly, any resolution with possible Charter-amendment

implications as to the size, the composition or the allocation of the Council seats must be adopted in strict conformity with the provisions of Article 108 of the Charter. Sixthly, it is important to study the principle of rotation and to agree upon the eligibility criteria for it in connection with the proposed expansion in the permanent-membership category. Such an agreement could help avoid the divisions and feuds that have begun to surface. Lastly, if there is no agreement on the expansion of permanent membership, expansion should be limited to the non-permanent category.

As to eligibility of States for permanent membership in the Security Council, and with a view to our commitment to what will be agreed upon within the OAU in connection with a system of rotation, we propose that the criteria for eligibility should include the degree of present and future economic development, historical weight, geographic location and size of population. They should also give due regard to the role played by a country in the maintenance of global and regional peace and security, including its ability to contribute to peacekeeping operations. Further, similar regard should be given to such a country's endeavours to preserve the interests of the region to which it belongs.

Egypt's regional and international contributions within the framework of Africa, the Arab and Islamic worlds and the Middle East region, as well as among the developing countries and emerging economies, undoubtedly qualify it to shoulder the responsibilities of permanent membership in a new, expanded Security Council providing balanced and equitable representation. However, Egypt will remain committed to the African consensus in this regard. I listened carefully to the statement made by the Foreign Minister of Singapore, and I suggest that the points he raised should be studied and given due attention by the General Assembly and the committees working in the field of the reform and expansion of the Security Council.

The non-aligned countries called for a reconsideration of the veto power, which contradicts the principles of democracy that must characterize contemporary world order and prevail both among and within States. As a first step towards that goal, we suggest that the use and scope of the veto power should be restricted to specific actions such as those which relate to threats to international peace and security and which are taken under Chapter VII of the Charter. We can also agree on excluding specific matters from the use of veto power, such as provision to the Council of the

information necessary for exercising its competence; humanitarian issues, including respect for instruments of international humanitarian law and ceasefire resolutions; and the selection of the United Nations Secretary-General.

Security Council reform and the improvement of its working methods require a re-evaluation of the sanctions regimes imposed by the Council, including their routine periodic review, their lifting and whether the regime in its current form achieves the goals for which it was instituted. If sanctions are intended to influence the behaviour of certain States so that they abide by international legality, it would be only logical to amend the way these sanctions are currently implemented in order to take into account the related humanitarian aspects and the sufferings inflicted upon the peoples. And after compliance, these sanctions must be lifted.

In all cases, it is important to consider setting specific time-frames for sanctions so that they do not end up being, in effect, a people's punishment. Discussions in this respect under "An Agenda for Peace" and the initial agreement reached thereon can be a viable basis for starting serious deliberations with a view to effecting positive changes in the current sanctions regime.

I turn now to the situation in the Middle East, where the peace process faces a serious crisis. The most apparent manifestation of this crisis is that the concept, principles and bases of the peace process are being completely shattered and squandered. The vision spawned in the peoples' minds of the sort of peace, as agreed upon at the United Nations and in Madrid, has started to dissipate. Trust has been replaced by doubt, and hope by frustration and despair in a tomorrow where justice will materialize and peace will prevail.

The peace process is based on governing principles, namely the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). At the heart of these principles are the land-for-peace formula and safeguarding the rights of the parties according to the balance struck by the Security Council and affirmed at the Madrid Peace Conference. This certainly applies to the three tracks of negotiations between Israel on the one hand and Syria, Lebanon and the Palestinians on the other. The Oslo accord did not deviate from the same principles, nor did it challenge their terms of reference or binding nature. On the contrary, it led to the recognition that the Palestinian people are a people with legitimate national and political rights.

It also recognized that the only way to establish peace and security in the region is through peaceful coexistence between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples, based on equality, justice, and, of course, Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories and the establishment of normal relations between the States in the Middle East.

These principles and concepts gave rise to a process of building bases for peace and its possibilities. In spite of the obstacles and the problems which confronted the process of negotiations, the credibility of the search for a peaceful solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict still existed.

This quest for peace had become a strategic choice characterizing the policies and orientations of the region's Governments, impelling the peoples of the region to envision a future Middle East under a just and comprehensive peace. Various methods and mechanisms for cooperation which would enable the region to achieve the requisite levels of development and progress were discussed. Despite the frequent diversity of views and their conflicting nature at certain times, that trend represented a healthy phenomenon: it indicated that the peoples of the region are already convinced of the peace concept. The only thing that remained was how to reinvigorate the method of achieving it.

Alas, confidence was lost, credibility was shaken and the peace process lost much of its momentum. For this, and for the present serious situation, the current Israeli Government's policy is responsible. Settlement activities, as well as Israel's reneging on agreements and commitments reached; making a mockery of legal accords; challenging the two sponsors of the peace process; pushing for confrontation; and giving rise to an overall feeling of despair could not but result in frustration and destruction. This will lead to a catastrophe whose responsibility, we hasten to underline here and now, lies squarely with the current Israeli policies.

This serious crisis inflicted on the peace process by the Israeli policies was recently considered by the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the States members of the League of Arab States. The Council adopted the following points, which constitute a unified Arab position on the current situation.

The first point is a rejection of the Israeli Government policies designed to undermine the peace process, its denial of the principles and bases of this

process, its evasion of the implementation of the commitments, undertakings and agreements reached within the context of the peace process, and its unilateral measures aimed at imposing a *fait accompli* in Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Golan, along with its aggression against southern Lebanon.

The second point is the upholding of a just and comprehensive peace as a strategic choice and objective on the basis of the principles of the peace process, and in particular of the relevant Security Council resolutions, the principle of land for peace and the attainment of the legitimate political rights of the Palestinian people, and a reaffirmation of complete Arab solidarity with this position.

The third point reiterates that Israel's breach of the principles and the bases of the peace process, its backtracking on the commitments, undertakings and agreements reached thereon and its procrastination in implementing these commitments have resulted in the current setback of the peace process. These Israeli policies have also led to a reconsideration of the steps taken towards Israel within the framework of the peace process. Full responsibility for this lies with the Israeli Government alone.

Fourth, negotiations on the three bilateral tracks should be resumed. On the Syrian track, negotiations should be resumed from wherever they ended. The two parties should commit themselves to what has already been achieved. On the Lebanese track, negotiations should centre upon the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978). And on the Palestinian track, negotiations should be resumed on the basis of implementing the contractual agreements reached, including the commitments of the interim period. Parallel to that, final status negotiations should start in order to lead to the Palestinian people's exercise of their right to self-determination and to the establishment of their independent state.

Fifth, the Council welcomed the American position as crystallized during the visit paid by the United States Secretary of State to the region this month. There was consensus regarding cooperation with United States policy as expressed by Mrs. Albright in her statement of 6 August 1997 to the National Press Club in Washington. That policy, which was reiterated during her recent visit to the Middle East and contacts with the States of the region, reaffirms the terms of reference of the Madrid Peace Conference, in particular the principle of land for peace, the implementation of the relevant Security Council

resolutions, the realization of the legitimate political rights of the Palestinian people, and the commitment to abstain from taking unilateral measures that undermine the permanent status negotiations. We stress the need to build on this positive position on the part of the United States, and call on Israel to respond positively to it. In this context, the steps that the Israeli Government is required to take to foster the peace process should be within the framework of key issues, not that of issues of a secondary or formalistic nature.

Sixth, the European role played in support of the peace process is welcome and the importance of its revitalization should be stressed.

Seventh, international legality in the context of the United Nations Security Council resolutions should be upheld and implemented.

A stable and just peace must be built on a strong basis of comprehensive security arrangements that take due account of the apprehensions, concerns and viewpoints of all parties. This can materialize only when Israel accedes to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as it is the only State in the region that has not yet done so. We should proceed forthwith with the implementation of President Hosni Mubarak's initiative to free the Middle East from all weapons of mass destruction and their delivering vehicles. It is a source of regret for us that so far no practical steps have been taken to rid our region of the threat of nuclear weapons. This might lead to the proliferation of such weapons. Consequently, I call upon the General Assembly and the NPT depositories to take the necessary steps to ensure Israel's accession to the NPT and for the prompt undertaking of serious negotiations to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, in implementation of the resolution adopted by the Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the NPT held in New York in April 1995. Such a nuclear-weapon-free zone could be established as a first step towards ridding the Middle East of all weapons of mass destruction.

Before concluding my remarks regarding the Middle East, I would like to refer to the serious situation in Iraq. I would like to highlight the importance of respecting Iraq's sovereignty and of ending the suffering of its people. Furthermore, the islands of the United Arab Emirates should be returned, and the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates over these islands should be respected. The Lockerbie issue should be brought to an

end in conformity with international legality. The territorial integrity of the Sudan should be preserved and respected. A settlement of the problems of Somalia should be reached. A healthy climate for relations should be created in the Middle East between States of the region and neighbouring countries, based upon mutual and balanced commitments along with a common interest in maintaining positive relations for the benefit of everyone.

Turning to Africa, I wish to refer to the ministerial meeting convened by the Security Council last week to consider the sources and causes of African conflicts and how to contain and resolve them. As I said in my statement before the Council, Africa has come a long way on the road of political and economic reform. What is needed now is to revitalize existing international initiatives in support of development and stability in Africa. Such international support is also required to solve the problems of refugees, enhance democratization and strengthen regional and subregional integration. This requires the fulfilment of promises by the international community to establish a true partnership between Africa, on the one hand, and the United Nations system and the international donor institutions on the other. This also requires strengthening existing cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity in conformity with the provisions of Chapter VIII of the Charter.

Since the dawn of history, the Mediterranean dimension has been an important framework for Egypt, influencing and being influenced by the centres of civilization and enlightenment in the region. Inasmuch as Europe — Eastern and Western — has been the main partner with Egypt in trade transactions, tourist flows and cultural interactions, so has Egypt been and will continue to be a major active party in ensuring stability and regulating a veritable interaction between the European dimension of Mediterranean security and the Mediterranean dimension of European security, in the full meaning of the comprehensive concept of contemporary security.

In this context, President Hosni Mubarak in November 1991 presented to the European Parliament his well-known initiative of establishing a framework for consultation and cooperation among the Mediterranean countries. By mid-1994, this idea was crystallized when the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of 11 Mediterranean countries held in Alexandria their constituent session for the Mediterranean Forum, which convened its fourth session last July in Algiers, where the ministers unanimously agreed that the Forum was a unique gathering

for frank dialogue and a mechanism for the formulation and testing of ideas and coordination of positions.

Through its chairmanship of the cultural working group of the Mediterranean Forum, Egypt looks forward to contributing to strengthening cultural cooperation among the member countries and stressing the common cultural features of the Mediterranean personality, based upon the integration and interaction of civilizations, rather than conflict and confrontation between them.

A similar exercise is currently under way with regard to Euro-Mediterranean interaction, in the framework of the Barcelona process. The second ministerial conference, convened in Malta last April, provided a good opportunity for frankness and an exchange of views to activate and correct the path of this historic process that brings together countries of the European Union and those of the south and the east of the Mediterranean. In so doing, this process will truly lead to the creation of a balanced partnership among all parties, as well as the establishment of a common zone of peace and prosperity in the Mediterranean basin.

In this context, Egypt follows with keen interest current developments in the Balkans, a region closely linked to the Mediterranean region, especially with regard to developments relating to the situation in Bosnia. Egypt believes that the only way out of tension in that region is that of international legality, the full and speedy implementation of the Dayton Agreements and the trying of war criminals, which represents an essential step towards establishing justice and stability in this region. Egypt reaffirms its partnership with the international community, the United Nations system and the donor institutions in the development and reconstruction of Bosnia in order to help heal the wounds of years of war and destruction.

I should not fail to address the concerns of Egypt and other developing countries regarding a number of challenges accompanying the process of trade and investment liberalization. These challenges are manifested in the continued pursuit by some of unilateral and arbitrary policies instead of abidance by the rules and regulations of the international trading system that we all worked so hard to adopt within the framework of the World Trade Organization.

This is in addition to the growing trend we witness today on the part of some of our trading partners who resort to covert protectionist practices, which hide behind

noble considerations such as environmental protection, respect for labour norms and human rights, in order to serve some narrow self-interests, to justify the restriction of access to markets and to impose trade sanctions.

On another plane, we should be well aware that the liberalization of investment is not a panacea for every malaise besetting our economies. Despite our interest in attracting investments, and despite our efforts to create a climate conducive to the flow of investments, the fact still remains that investment agreements should strike a fair balance between protecting the rights of the investor, on the one hand and ensuring the rights and interests of the receiving States, on the other.

A year ago, from this rostrum, I called for concerted efforts against attempts to marginalize the role of the United Nations.

If we are still awaiting the development of rules of international conduct under a new world order that is still evolving, we then urgently need to ensure the survival of a strong and effective United Nations that can lead the way for us in this nascent world order.

The Acting President: I now call on the Chairman of the delegation of New Zealand, His Excellency Mr. Michael John Powles.

Mr. Powles (New Zealand): May I begin by congratulating the President on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. We are in good hands as we begin our work during what the Secretary-General has called "the reform Assembly."

I know, too, that my Foreign Minister, on whose behalf I am speaking, would want to warmly congratulate the outgoing President, Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, on his efforts during the past 12 months. It has been a challenging time, and he has demonstrated the decisive leadership we all expected of him.

Two years ago, at the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, world leaders undertook to give the twenty-first century an Organization equipped, financed and structured to serve effectively the peoples in whose name it was established. With the year 2000 now only 27 months away, we are still far from that goal. This is a matter of great concern to New Zealand. We firmly believe in the United Nations as a vehicle to a better life for the world's citizens, and not just for those who live now. We have a responsibility to strengthen the Organization for our

grandchildren and beyond. We must not let them and ourselves down by allowing an unreformed United Nations to slide into increasing irrelevance.

We do not pretend the process of reform is easy or finite. As the Secretary-General has said, "Reform is not an event; it is a process." [A/51/950, para. 25] Our own involvement on the intergovernmental track, including co-chairing the Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System and the Working Group on an Agenda for Development, has given us a good appreciation of the complexities involved in producing positive outcomes acceptable to 185 Member States.

We know the Secretary-General faces the same issues with his 16 July package. As with any package, it is inevitable that some Member States will find fault with individual elements. But we are firmly of the belief that the package should be viewed as a whole. This will be for the greater good of the Organization. Difficulties with individual elements of the package should not be allowed to unpick the overall good which is in it. We appeal to Member States to acknowledge this reality and to give the Secretary-General their generous support. It is small countries like New Zealand, and developing countries, which, as we see it, stand most to benefit from what the Secretary-General is trying to achieve.

To reform and strengthen the United Nations effectively, we see a need to redistribute resources away from administration and into areas which are important for those of us who place a high priority on the United Nations itself. We support efficiencies, not cost-cutting. The crucial difference between the two is that one approach seeks simply to save money without regard to the impact on the Organization. We cannot support this. The United Nations is too important to us to allow such a downgrading.

An approach based on efficiencies allows us to reinvigorate the United Nations by reinvesting the money saved from outdated administrative practices. This is central to the Secretary-General's package. In particular, the proposal for a "development dividend" channelling resources freed by administrative efficiencies into strengthening the development activities of the United Nations is most welcome. We can certify from our own national experience that the sort of management reforms proposed in the package do indeed lead to a reduction in administrative overheads, allowing more to be delivered in terms of substantive programmes.

At a time when development funds are diminishing, the significance of this step should not be lost. New Zealand is a country that is increasing its overseas aid — by 40 per cent since the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Rio Summit. Our contributions through the United Nations system have also increased by nearly 50 per cent over the last five years. But the global trend is the opposite, particularly among the larger traditional donors. It is becoming harder and harder for Governments to meet their Charter commitment to promote the economic and social advancement of all peoples. One of the modest outcomes of the last two years of reform efforts within the United Nations has been the elaboration of an Agenda for Development reaffirming the primacy of development, setting objectives and recommending ways of achieving them. But, with the best will in the world, implementing that Agenda will come to naught in the absence of adequate funding.

The Secretary-General's reforms are designed to deliver more for development. Equally important, they are designed to boost confidence in the United Nations, confidence which two weeks ago was given tangible form by Mr. Ted Turner's billion-dollar grant to assist United Nations agencies in key development activities. That generous offer has given the Organization a real boost and could be a catalyst for leveraging further private-sector funds for development. We must support the Secretary-General's efforts to make the United Nations the best vehicle for delivering such assistance.

Member States need to trust the Secretary-General to fulfil his responsibilities under the Charter: to give effect to the policy directions which they set. We need to be clear and realistic in the priorities we set for the United Nations. We cannot mandate the Organization with more and more new tasks and somehow expect these to be achieved within current resources. And, having set the priorities, we must resist the temptation to micro-manage. This will involve a sea-change in the way Member States have become accustomed to operating. The Fifth Committee still makes decisions about staff numbers and placement within the Secretariat, administrative decisions that in any modern organization would be the responsibility of its managers.

We know that the transitional process of change will not be easy for those working in the Secretariat either. But — and we are conscious of our own experience in New Zealand in instituting public-sector reform — the managerial and results-based budgeting proposals in the July package will improve work performance and will deliver greater job satisfaction to those working for the

United Nations. The Organization's most important resource is its people. The package recognizes the vital importance of investment in staff. If the best and brightest are to be attracted to and retained by the United Nations, they must be recruited, trained, promoted and paid according to procedures which are as good as the best employed by Member States.

It is also important to stress here the loyalty owed to the Secretary-General by those who work for him. He has the right to expect their full support for his leadership and for the initiatives he puts forward. Anything less would be dishonourable, would subvert due process and would potentially disenfranchise Member States. It could not be tolerated.

I referred earlier to the intergovernmental track. It is worth touching on the key issues of Security Council and financial reform.

On the former, New Zealand will judge specific proposals for enlargement of the Security Council by the yardstick of democracy and the representativeness of the institution as a whole. Increasing the proportion of permanent to non-permanent members runs counter to this principle. Nor could a package on Security Council reform be acceptable to us without substantive proposals opening up and modernizing the workings of the Council. Sunshine, an American jurist once observed, is the best disinfectant. Member States must continue to participate in the debate in the search for a consensus solution.

On financial reform, New Zealand is strongly concerned about the crisis facing the United Nations. It is true that there are problems with the scales of assessments for both the regular and the peacekeeping budgets. The present floor has a negative impact on smaller, vulnerable nations, such as the South Pacific island countries, New Zealand's neighbours. This is just one example of the kind of problem that needs to be addressed.

But those who want to see changes made to the scale need to offer genuine inducements, not threats. We cannot accept that any Member State is entitled to withhold payments unilaterally or that the assessment of those countries that will not pay their dues should be picked up by others. All assessed contributions must be paid in full, on time and unconditionally. It is a violation of international legal obligations to do otherwise. This must be regarded with the utmost seriousness by Member States. It undermines the Organization's ability to

operate. It penalizes, through damage to the Organization, those Member States that abide by their obligations. When the State responsible for the largest percentage of arrears owed to the United Nations is also the richest, and when that State in addition attaches conditions to the payment of only a portion of what it owes, it is understandable that these actions should generate real scepticism in this Assembly.

This sorry state of affairs must be resolved quickly. But it can be resolved only on the basis of a credible commitment that all conditions will be eliminated now and that all payments will be made on time. And that means in January each year.

I would like to raise another reform issue which has not featured prominently in discussions to date, namely United Nations regional groupings. It seems to us that this is an issue that deserves examination. The groupings are in need of revision to bring them up to date with present-day geopolitical realities. It is anomalous, for example, that our Pacific island neighbours, members with us of the South Pacific Forum grouping, belong to the Asian Group while, for historical reasons, New Zealand belongs to the Group of Western European and Other States. The fundamental importance we accord our membership of the institutions of the South Pacific Forum, of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council and of the Regional Forum of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and our relationship with ASEAN itself, should be able to be better reflected in the regional groupings. We accordingly see value in a reconfiguration of New York electoral groupings to bring them more in line with those used elsewhere in the United Nations system, where New Zealand in most cases sits with our South Pacific partners and our East Asian neighbours.

Developments in other regions will result in further anomalies in the present structure. We see at a future stage some long and complex negotiations over regional seat allocations for a revised system of regional groups. New Zealand of course will join with others in negotiating new and equitable allocations of seats. While we look forward to the outcome of that process, we realize that it will not come overnight. In the meantime, and as a matter of high priority, my delegation is working to forge a closer relationship with the Asian regional group in New York.

I would like to close my statement by focusing once more on the utmost importance of Member States' giving positive endorsement to the Secretary-General's package at this General Assembly, as New Zealand will be doing —

not only because it provides a positive and concrete start to a reform process, but also because the alternative of not supporting the Secretary-General will, in our view, seriously undermine the credibility of the United Nations.

For two years the United Nations has been involved in the current reform exercise. But none of us can pretend that reform is an end in itself, or that introspection is an ongoing excuse for inaction. The United Nations exists to deliver concrete, substantive assistance to the hundreds of millions most in need. No amount of self-analysis is a substitute for that. Moreover, sustained emphasis on introspection will erode the Organization's capacity, and possibly also its will, to perform the tasks for which it was created.

The challenge now is to embrace the bold programme of reform outlined by the Secretary-General, to use this General Assembly to begin to implement it, and then to direct our energy where it rightly belongs, to taking practical steps to reduce suffering and build a better and more peaceful world: like drawing up a solid, practical programme for alleviating poverty in the coming decade; like establishing an international criminal court which will ensure that individuals are held responsible for war crimes; like supporting and enhancing the United Nations capability for preventive diplomacy; and like invigorating the United Nations capacity for peacekeeping.

These are the standards by which the real success or failure of the United Nations will be judged. New Zealand is determined that the verdict will be a positive one. Working together, we can ensure that it is.

The Acting President: The next speaker on my list is His Excellency Mr. Ali Osman Mohamed Taha, Minister for External Relations of Sudan, to whom I now give the floor.

Mr. Taha (Sudan)(*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset I would like to express my congratulations to the President on the confidence the General Assembly showed in him by electing him to preside over fifty-second session. We have no doubt that his experience and capability in multilateral diplomacy will assist him in conducting the deliberations of this session towards success. We assure him of the cooperation and support of the delegation of the Sudan.

I would also like to express my gratitude and appreciation to the President's predecessor, His

Excellency Ambassador Razali Ismail, for his distinguished efforts and bold initiatives within the context of strengthening the role of the United Nations and the improvement of its methods of work.

Likewise, we would like to extend our congratulations to the United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan. In a very short time since the assumption of his post, he has demonstrated enthusiasm, ability and patience in leading this Organization. This has been embodied in his initiative to reform it, improve its methods of work and enhance its stature.

We commend the genuine endeavours of the Secretary-General to reform the United Nations system. In this connection, the Sudan will stand by his side until the United Nations realizes the purposes for which it was established, chief among which is the strengthening of peace and international cooperation for the achievement of development and the eradication of poverty, particularly in Africa and in developing countries.

We would also like to affirm the keenness of the Sudan that the programme of reform should result in strengthening the ability of the United Nations to respond to humanitarian, social and developmental issues undertaken by the Organization. Furthermore, the reform should lead to the consolidation of the participation of developing countries in the Organization and their equitable representation in the Secretariat.

The Sudan calls for giving the reform endeavours enough time. The results and recommendations of the Open-ended High Level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System, adopted by the General Assembly, should be given special attention. My country reaffirms its intention to participate effectively in the meetings to be agreed upon within the proper framework, with the aim of reaching a consensus on all aspects of the reform.

The Sudan attaches special attention and interest to the issue of reform of the Security Council through the enlargement of its permanent and non-permanent membership, and the improvement of its methods of work. Our interest derives from our deep-rooted conviction about the importance of enhancing transparency and democracy in the work of the Council, so as to respond to the changing realities and the current challenges facing international peace and security, in accordance with the principles and provisions of the Charter which define the duties of the Council in the peaceful resolution of

conflict — far from using it as an instrument of peoples' punishment.

The Sudan, while welcoming the efforts made for the reform of the Security Council, reaffirms the necessity of observing equitable geographical representation and preserving the principle of state sovereignty. In this connection, we would like to reiterate our commitment to the New Delhi Declaration of the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as our commitment to the African position taken at the Harare summit.

We wish to stress the importance of linking the right of veto to the aspects relating to enlargement of the Council and improvement of its methods of work, in a way that would secure a comprehensive consideration through deliberate negotiations relative to all aspects, within a democratic and open-ended membership.

It is important to deal with the points that the Foreign Minister of Singapore made in his statement this morning. At this time last year I informed the Assembly of our efforts to establish peace in the Sudan, which resulted at that time in the signing of the "Peace Charter". Today, it is with honour and pride that I convey to this distinguished gathering that we have succeeded in evolving that "Peace Charter" into a comprehensive "Peace Agreement" signed in April this year by the Government and the fighting factions and political entities in southern Sudan. The Agreement has been endorsed by the Sudanese Parliament, and thus it has, *par excellence*, become one of the most important political events in the history of the Sudan.

The Khartoum Peace Agreement provides for a lasting settlement to the Sudanese problem. The negotiating parties have reached a formula which identifies a framework for peaceful coexistence in the country. In the Agreement, the principle of citizenship constitutes the basis for rights, duties and equality of participation of all Sudanese in the responsibilities of public life, without discrimination as to race or religion. It further consolidates the principle of democratic evolution in the Sudan. It clearly defines the question of power sharing between the state governments and the federal authority within the federal system in the country. In addition, it provides for the bases and criteria for wealth-sharing in the country.

With regard to public liberties and human rights, the agreement guarantees the same liberties and rights embodied in divine revelation and in the texts of relevant

international instruments and agreements. In that way it will have a considerable influence in consolidating and guaranteeing human rights. Furthermore, the agreement allows for the people of southern Sudan to exercise their right to self-determination through a free referendum to be held at the end of a four-year transitional period.

An additional, complementary arrangement was agreed upon to prevent hostilities and ensure a ceasefire between the signatory parties with the aim of enhancing the requisites for peace and stability. Furthermore, in accordance with the collective will of the people of the Sudan, a presidential decree granted an unconditional general amnesty in respect of all crimes committed and all civil and criminal claims asserted during the 14 years preceding the signing of the agreement.

In our quest to enhance the scope of a comprehensive and lasting peace, an agreement was reached last week with the only remaining faction that was still carrying arms, thereby allowing for the resumption of peace talks on 28 October 1997 in the Kenyan capital under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). I am honoured to be able to renew the determination and to express the eagerness of the Government of the Sudan for making the forthcoming talks a success.

The courageous steps taken by the Government of the Sudan towards achieving a just and lasting peace have been widely commended and appreciated by many States in the world. One of its early positive results was the beginning of the voluntary repatriation of displaced persons and refugees from neighbouring countries.

We call upon the United Nations, the international financial institutions and our development partners to contribute to the resettlement of the returnees by shifting from humanitarian assistance to programmes of rehabilitation and the provision of developmental assistance needed to consolidate the foundations of peace, which has been sought for many decades. This call derives its legitimacy from the spirit and content of the Security Council ministerial-level meeting held on 25 September to discuss the current situation in Africa. The meeting consolidated the link between peace and development, the latter being one of the basic human rights.

In the same context, in striving to develop a system of good and responsible governance, the Sudan has witnessed important constitutional developments, which have been manifested in the establishment of a national committee for

preparing the draft of a permanent constitution to be submitted to the legislative body and then presented to the people in a referendum.

In the economic field, in support of a market economy and policies of liberalization, we have taken serious steps towards the rationalization of public expenditure, the privatization of the public sector, the abolition of restrictions on internal and external trade and the promotion of investment. These policies have led to the reactivation of the economy and reduced the inflation rate from 114 per cent at the beginning of this year to 28.5 per cent in August of this year. Furthermore, we have achieved a positive growth rate of 5.5 per cent and stability in the rate of exchange of the national currency. This progress was commended by the International Monetary Fund mission in its report to the Executive Council of the Fund last August. However, the major obstacle to the accomplishment of the economic reform programme continues to be an insufficiency of external resources needed to boost production. We therefore appeal to the donor countries and the international financial institutions to provide the necessary resources for the completion of the process of economic reform. We also reaffirm that the Sudan welcomes and encourages private and joint investments in all fields.

As for the problem of debt, it is imperative to address it within a comprehensive international framework and not on a bilateral basis, so as to make possible the building of a world economic system based on justice and equality among all States without distinction.

In recognition of the importance of regional economic cooperation, African States have taken steps towards the revitalization of the African Economic Community, in addition to the subregional economic organizations, all of which need the support and assistance of the international community.

We should not fail to stress the aspirations of Africa with regard to the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the importance of following up on the outcome of the World Food Summit in the context of achieving food security for the nations of the continent and of the necessity to provide the required resources to the countries concerned. In this context, the Sudan reaffirms its readiness to effectively contribute to the programmes and action plans for the provision of food, with the serious participation of the international community.

Economic development on the one hand and security and stability on the other are two sides of the same coin. In speaking about poverty eradication in the African continent, we must stress the need for the realization of peace as a means to guarantee the security of the African peoples on the one hand and to accelerate the continent's development on the other hand. In this respect we commend the positive developments in Liberia and we hope that this model will encourage our brothers in Somalia and Congo (Brazzaville) to stop the bloodshed. We also hope that in Sierra Leone the endeavours being led by the countries of West Africa will succeed in solving the problems facing that country. Africa's need for security, stability and development requires it to become a zone free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction. Africa needs assistance in clearing anti-personnel landmines, left behind by civil wars in a number of its countries, including my own.

The Sudan supports the efforts of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and of its Secretary-General, Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim, to restore peace and stability in many African States. With regard to the formation of African peacekeeping forces, we stress the need to harmonize any measures taken in this matter with the resolutions and positions of the OAU. Africa should have the right, through its regional organizations, to take the initiative and to lead in this matter.

While addressing the subject of economic hardship in Africa, it is incumbent upon us to mention the exasperating effects of the imposition of sanctions, in particular those imposed on the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. We call for the settlement of this issue on the basis of the proposal presented by the OAU and the League of Arab States, supported by the Non-Aligned Movement.

We support the proposal of the Non-Aligned Movement to lay down specific measures and rules for sanctions and to strictly observe the provisions of the Charter. We share the concerns expressed by the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization for this year about the negative effects of sanctions on peoples. We look forward to the proposals he has promised to present in this regard.

In Asia, we welcome the return of Hong Kong to the parent country, the People's Republic of China. We are following with interest the efforts of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy to Afghanistan. We hope that the parties in conflict will cooperate with the United Nations so as to reach a formula for understanding and agreement. We

also call upon the international community to support the continuous efforts to establish peace in the Korean peninsula.

With regard to developments in the Middle East, the Sudan believes that a comprehensive, just and lasting peace cannot be achieved without a total commitment to the principles of justice and the complete preservation of the rights of the Palestinian people and the Arab States in the region, or without a commitment to the agreements and accords reached by the parties concerned. Israel should abandon its settlement policies and withdraw from all the occupied Arab territories on the basis of the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, which continue to be the point of reference for a peaceful settlement and for the achievement of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

We agree with what the Secretary-General stated in his report to the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly about the seriousness of the situation in the region. The Secretary-General warned of the consequences of the settlement policies in the occupied Arab territories and the attempts to effect demographic and legal changes in Al-Quds aimed at its Judaization and the alteration of its legal, geographical, historical, religious and civilizational status. The Sudan calls upon the international community to shoulder its responsibilities in the face of the deterioration of the situation and the escalation of confrontation to save the region from the spectre of war that appears over the horizon as a result of the unacceptable Israeli practices. Furthermore, the Sudan is strongly opposed to Israeli attempts to impose collective sanctions on the Palestinian people whatever the justification or the pretext.

In the domain of international relations, the Sudan follows policies and holds firm positions based on its commitment to international and regional charters, the respect of good-neighbourliness and regional cooperation and the suppression of terrorism and threats to regional and international security.

The Sudan continues to call for the abandonment of conflict and for regarding the interest of peoples as a priority that supersedes transient disagreements.

The application of the slogans of pluralism and democracy that characterize the present epoch in the progress of humanity essentially requires respect for the diverse cultural contexts of the peoples of the world. Those cultures should be allowed the opportunity of free

and equitable self-expression in order to enrich human experience and elevate the values of tolerance and acceptance of the other. That would lead to the restriction of recourse to violent and extreme expressions of injustice resulting from isolation and cultural arrogance.

All religions uphold the principles of tolerance, the acceptance of pluralism and coexistence with others. The Holy Koran says:

"Say Ye: 'We believe in Allah and the revelation Given to us, and to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to all Prophets from their Lord: We make no difference Between one and another of them: And we submit to Allah.'" (*The Holy Koran, II:136*).

In this context, we support the statement of the German Minister for Foreign Affairs regarding the need to encourage dialogue between civilizations to replace conflicts and rivalry, in order to build a world of tolerance and cooperation and so that slogans of pluralism and democracy may not themselves become a pretext for cultural hegemony.

The adoption by the United Nations of the idea of setting up a body to promote dialogue between religions and civilizations would pave the way for the realization of that noble objective and would reinstate respect for lofty moral values. It would act as a strong deterrent to such social ills as drug abuse, the escalation of violence and terrorism and family disintegration, thus clearing the way for a better future for humanity as it enters a new millennium.

The Acting President: I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel, His Excellency Mr. David Levy.

Mr. Levy (Israel) (*spoke in Hebrew; interpretation furnished by the delegation*): I would like to begin by congratulating the President on his unanimous election to preside over the fifty-second session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. It is my hope that at this session the Assembly will be successful in bringing nations closer to each other and in finding ways to address the challenges that face all countries and nations, north and south, east and west.

I also wish to congratulate his predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, for the manner in which he carried out his duties.

We mark this year the twentieth anniversary of the peace initiative of the late Prime Minister of Israel, Menachem Begin, and the late President of Egypt, Anwar Sadat. Those leaders, with their historic decision and their courageous leadership, pioneered the way towards the first peace treaty between Israel and an Arab neighbour, Egypt.

Throughout their entire history, the people of Israel have aspired to live in peace. Together with our constant call for peace with our neighbours, we have not spared any effort to seek, whether through direct or indirect contacts, a partner in this effort. Today, too, we continue to seek channels for dialogue and to build bridges to peace.

In recent years, since 1991, after the principles for negotiating peace in the Middle East were laid down at Madrid, we have achieved a number of important advances with the establishment of full peace between Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the signing of interim accords with the Palestinians. Nevertheless, the road to full peace is still long, and negotiations with the Palestinians and with Syria and Lebanon still lie ahead of us.

Immediately after the last elections, the Government of Israel accepted the need to continue to advance the Oslo accords and has acted to implement them. In the past year we have spared no effort to implement those accords, but, unfortunately, the trust that is the lifeblood of the entire process has been undermined as a result of the failure of the Palestinians to carry out their commitments according to the agreements they have signed.

In the past year, while pursuing these efforts, we have endured many tests and have suffered ongoing terrorist attacks and bloodshed. Our deep-rooted aspiration for peace, security and tranquillity has been stained by the shedding of innocent blood, by the murder of men, women and children cut down by barbaric terrorist attacks. Yet despite our deep sorrow and mourning over the loss of those innocent lives, the hope for peace has not been extinguished in the hearts of the citizens of Israel.

The citizens of Israel have taken upon themselves great risks for peace, but there is none among them who is willing to continue to pay the bloody price that is being demanded in the name of peace. We must break this tragic and violent cycle. It is only through joint action in

confronting the terror that trust will be re-established and the doubts regarding intentions be removed.

As I stated in my remarks at the fifty-first session of this Assembly, all Israel is united in its deep desire for peace and for a life of calm and security. In Israel, both right and left are united in this quest.

If trust can be restored, if the principle of reciprocity is honoured, it will be possible for us to proceed. We have already proved our willingness to do so, through our decisions and actions since taking office and in the signing and implementation of the Hebron agreement in all its aspects.

Peace cannot live side by side with continued incitement, hostility, violence and terror. Peace means, in essence, the unequivocal and irreversible abandonment of violence. Dialogue, negotiation, compromise and the honouring of agreements — those are the path to peace.

These principles apply throughout the world and must apply also in the Middle East. The existence of two parallel tracks, one on which negotiations are pursued while a second track of violence, terror and bloodshed continues unimpeded, is totally unacceptable. This is a direct challenge and affront to the very concept of peace.

Terror does not suddenly erupt from nowhere. It is not a spontaneous phenomenon. Too often we have seen terrorist leaders and their organizations adopt the facade of innocent and peaceful organizations, charitable and welfare organizations, while under this cover they contribute to the preparation and perpetration of vicious terrorist attacks. Terror can be likened to a volcano ready to erupt at any moment, whose boiling lava threatens to destroy all who lie in its path.

Those who resort to terror are seeking not only to kill Israelis but also to hurt their own brethren. Terror cannot be accepted as a legitimate tool for resolving differences. It must be rejected, absolutely and unequivocally, and it must be fought unrelentingly. We will not agree to live under its constant threat.

The words of the President of the United States and of the Foreign Minister of Russia at this Assembly just a few days ago are important and should guide us all in this matter. I quote President Clinton when he spoke from this very rostrum:

“terrorism is always a crime and never a justifiable political act.” [See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Plenary Meetings, 5th meeting*]

Thus, the international community bears the responsibility for ensuring that terrorism enjoys no political support, recognition or legitimacy, not even implicitly.

In the 1993 Oslo accords, the Palestinian Authority and Arafat, its leader, undertook in the name of the Palestinian people to fight terrorism. They reaffirmed this commitment again in the 1995 Interim Agreement, again one year ago at the Washington summit and again in the Hebron agreement. Much to our consternation, it has been proved that this commitment has not been upheld as required, thus causing the present crisis of confidence.

Israel stands firmly upon its call to the Palestinian Authority to fulfil its promise to fight relentlessly against terror. The Authority must act jointly and in full cooperation with us against terrorism and violence. We seek neither to dictate nor to coerce. We seek merely the implementation of signed agreements. The fight against terror, in our humble opinion, is also in the Palestinian interest.

In response to the repeated crises in the process caused by the failure of the Palestinian Authority to live up to its commitments, Israel proposes a binding code of conduct for relations between us. This code should include, first, the rejection of violence as a means for achieving political goals; secondly, preservation of the framework of direct negotiations and agreement to refrain from attempts to transfer disputes and negotiations onto the international stage; thirdly, the institutionalization of permanent channels of communication, including in times of crisis; fourthly, a cessation of incitement and the call to violence and jihad, and their replacement with the language of reconciliation and mutual respect; and, fifthly, the advancement and encouragement of normalization and support for regional activities.

The purpose of this code of conduct is to facilitate uninterrupted negotiations and crisis management, and to create an atmosphere of dialogue. This code must respond to the sensitivities and needs of both sides. We believe that the adoption of the above principles will allow us to overcome the present crisis and help in preventing future ones as the negotiations proceed. These rules of the game will also contribute to renewed trust

between the leaders and greater confidence between the peoples.

In the wake of the visit to the Middle East of the United States Secretary of State, renewed agreement has been reached to continue the efforts at restoring the peace process to its proper track. We have been conducting intensive talks in recent days, with the assistance of the United States, both in Washington and here, with a view to resuming the negotiations and advancing our efforts to reach a permanent settlement with the Palestinians.

Israel values and appreciates the action of the United States Secretary of State and her commitment and efforts to extricate the peace process from its current impasse, to bring the parties closer together and to ensure the success of the negotiations. We are fully committed to these efforts.

Israel reaffirms its proposal to conduct accelerated negotiations, according to an agreed timetable, on permanent status. We propose conducting negotiations in which the sides will agree upon the desired outcomes and the way towards achieving them. This proposal is intended to hasten the attainment of a peaceful settlement, not to delay it. This is also our call and our proposal to the Palestinian Authority.

The international community can play an important role in facilitating the dialogue between the sides, which will make it possible for us to resolve our differences through direct negotiations. It is only through direct negotiations that we can bring this process to a successful conclusion. One-sided international declarations, dictates or pressures will not help. Attempts to internationalize the dispute and to transfer the arena of negotiations to the United Nations and other international forums only serve to create unnecessary obstacles and to make already entrenched positions more rigid.

The comprehensive peace we yearn for will not be achieved until we reach peace agreements with Syria and Lebanon. It is imperative to reach understandings and agreement that will enable us to renew negotiations and to resolve all the matters at issue between us. We expect to find in Syria and its leadership a partner in the search for a just peace. If Syria has indeed made a strategic choice in favour of peace — the “peace of the brave”, as claimed by its leadership — then we must explore together every possible avenue, at any place and at any time, for renewing the talks between us.

Israel cannot accept the continued violence and terror on its northern border. The terrorist activities of organizations such as Hezbollah and the fear of Katyusha rockets and attacks upon our cities and towns bear the threat of ongoing regional tension and continued bloodshed. There is no territorial dispute between Israel and Lebanon. We wish to see a sovereign, free and independent Lebanon acting determinedly against the terrorist organizations that operate from its territory.

If we are to reach peace, we cannot make do only with agreements and contracts. The reality of peace means normalization, open borders, freedom of movement, commerce and cooperation for the benefit of the entire region. These are the soul and essence of peace. Normalization is not a prize or a gift for Israel alone.

The decisions of the Foreign Ministers of the Arab League at their recent meeting in Cairo, just over one week ago, stand in direct contradiction to the aspirations for peace and undermine its foundations. The attempts to prevent normalization with Israel, to freeze the level of existing relations with it, to close liaison and interests offices between Israel and Arab neighbours and to reactivate the Arab boycott add up, in practice, to a boycott of peace itself. This is a destructive policy which is reversing the process.

The ongoing and intentional freeze of the multilateral talks also has a deleterious effect on the entrenchment of peace. The multilateral talks were meant and should serve as a platform and incentive for building peace. We must promote the bilateral and multilateral channels alike and not make one conditional upon the other, nor create further obstacles and barriers on the road to peace. The question mark hanging over the regional economic conference scheduled to take place later this year in Doha, Qatar, is further evidence of this negative drive.

The countries of the Middle East that are party to the peace effort have a common interest in regional stability and the advancement of prosperity and well-being for all the nations of the region. We face together the growing shortage of water and the ever-expanding desert. We are also facing dangers from within our region that threaten to undermine the stability of the regimes of various nations and to plunge the entire region into violence, war and bloodshed.

It was only a few years ago that the entire world was forced into forming a coalition to combat an aggressive dictator who sought to conquer a neighbouring country and to terrorize our entire region. Today, we face new and even more extreme dangers, but the lessons of recent experience have not been learned and many countries turn a blind eye to the threat.

The leadership of Iran continues to speak in terms that threaten the State of Israel and call for its destruction. Yet the international community continues to remain deaf and refuses to speak out against Iran's policies, declarations and actions.

Iran's efforts, like those of Iraq, to acquire operational weapons of mass destruction of all kinds represent the greatest threat to security and stability in the Middle East and beyond. The ramifications of Iran's weapons programme extend far beyond the geographical confines of our region. They threaten the security of other members of the international community and their interests.

Israel reiterates its call to the members of the international family of nations — and at their head the United States, Russia and the members of the European Union and of the Commonwealth of Independent States — to exercise the full weight of their influence and to take concrete steps to prevent this development, which represents a threat to the existence of the State of Israel.

After the establishment, as we hope, of peace treaties between Israel and every country of the region, it will be possible to create a regional security system that would provide multilateral and shared solutions to the range of security problems in the Middle East, including a mutually and effectively verifiable Middle East free of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. These are our goals and we must act to achieve them.

Israel is an active and responsible member of the family of nations represented in this body. However, 50 years after the United Nations adopted, on 29 November 1947, the resolution calling for the establishment of the State of Israel, we are still denied our equal rights in this Organization.

We attach great importance to the fundamental reform of the United Nations work. We also share the opinion of other United Nations Member countries that believe that the Organization urgently requires greater efficiency and a redirecting of its valuable but limited resources towards its truly important tasks. At the same time, we are convinced

that no reform can be completed so long as the question of Israel's membership of a regional group remains unresolved. We call upon this Organization to correct this anomaly.

Much to our chagrin, in the last year we have seen an intensification of the political campaign waged against Israel at the United Nations. This campaign only impedes the peace process and further undermines confidence between the parties. We call upon the Member States to refrain from lending their support to such resolutions. The time has come for this Assembly to reduce the number of resolutions on the Middle East that it adopts each year and to contribute positively to creating an atmosphere conducive to direct negotiations between the parties.

As part of Israel's international and regional commitment and of its credo as a State, we are engaged in cooperative programmes with many countries, with which we share the experience and knowledge we have acquired in various fields. Israel attaches great importance to its international cooperation programme and to assisting various peoples to address the challenges of development and the hazards of nature, hunger and disease.

Over more than three decades, tens of thousands of trainees have participated in courses in Israel and in their own countries within the framework of Israel's cooperation and assistance programme in the fields of education, health, agriculture, industry, social affairs and leadership. We are especially proud of the participation in recent years of trainees from Arab countries, amongst them Palestinians. These trainees are emissaries of goodwill, ambassadors of peace, who bear with them the message and the great hope of human well-being. As in the words of the prophet:

"Each shall help his neighbour and make him strong".

This year, the Jewish people in Israel and around the world marks the jubilee of its national revival. Fifty years ago, the Jewish people restored its national sovereignty in its ancient homeland. Throughout the dark days of our 2,000-year dispersion, we dreamt of the day that we would renew our national life in the land of our forefathers, the land of Israel.

It is the privilege of our generation to fulfil this aspiration. The Jewish people has returned and built up

its land. The Jewish people is once again gathering in its ancient home and has succeeded in building a vibrant and democratic society, a flourishing economy, science, research and industry.

For the past 50 years, we have laboured to ensure Israel's security and independence, while always seeking peace and good-neighbourly relations in our region. Fifty years on, the State of Israel is an irremovable reality.

This week, we mark the beginning of the Jewish new year. At this holy time, every Jew turns his eye towards the heavens with a prayer in his heart for the peace of the world, the end of misery and a new dawn of hope for all. On this day of remembrance, the blow of the shofar is accompanied by the prayer:

"may the year and its troubles pass and a new year and its blessings begin".

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova, His Excellency Mr. Nicolae Tabacaru.

Mr. Tabacaru (Republic of Moldova) (*interpretation from French*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate the President wholeheartedly on his election to the presidency of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. I am especially pleased at the election of a distinguished representative of Ukraine, a country which is a neighbour and friend of the Republic of Moldova, to this important post. After declaring their independence six years ago, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine worked to create prosperous and democratic societies. I am convinced that the President, with his great skills and with the support of all the Member States, will be able to discharge with distinction this lofty mission which has been entrusted to him during this crucial period for the United Nations.

I would also like to express my appreciation for the contribution made by Mr. Razali Ismail in his capacity as President during the previous session. I wish also to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his efforts to reform this global Organization.

It is my honour and privilege to address the General Assembly for the first time, and I would like to convey a message of friendship and solidarity from the people of the Republic of Moldova.

My country, which is very much devoted to the ideals of the Charter of the United Nations, strongly supports the reform process of the United Nations. That is why we have taken note with interest of the reform programme proposed by the Secretary-General. This package of proposals is designed to achieve a reform in order to deal better with the challenges of the coming millennium. We have welcomed such initiatives and we support them.

It is clear that the reform of the United Nations can move forward only if the financial crisis of the Organization is settled. There is no doubt that Member States must fulfil their financial obligations on time and in full. At the same time, it is indeed necessary to reform the system for the payment of contributions in order to achieve a fair assessment, one that better takes into account the principle of capacity to pay of each country. For our part, we will spare no effort to honour our financial obligations.

The Republic of Moldova fully supports the efforts of the United Nations to maintain international peace and security. In the five years since our country was admitted to membership in the United Nations, we have co-sponsored several resolutions in this important field of activity.

In the field of disarmament, last year the delegation of the Republic of Moldova likewise voted in favour of the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Consequently, I am pleased to report that on 24 September I signed this important Treaty on the complete ban on nuclear testing. We are convinced that the implementation of this Treaty can enhance international security.

The Republic of Moldova also supports the efforts of the international community to limit the use of and ultimately to eliminate certain conventional weapons which have injurious and indiscriminate effects, including anti-personnel landmines. We are ready to contribute to the efforts being made to obtain these objectives.

The positive developments which have characterized the activity of the Organization in recent years have brought about certain concepts and the diversification of mechanisms for action in the field of international peace and security. Some of these mechanisms could be implemented soon. Perhaps I need not stress here the usefulness and benefits of the United Nations standby forces, which all Member States welcome. Yet, I wish to

emphasize that the Republic of Moldova would like to contribute to this system and that last year our Government expressed its readiness to take part in the United Nations standby forces. That is why my country intends to provide to the United Nations Secretariat as soon as possible information concerning contingents and equipment which are available for this purpose.

Moreover, the Republic of Moldova is considering the possibility of taking part in United Nations peacekeeping operations. We believe that our country has already accumulated a certain amount of experience in this field through its participation in a variety of international manoeuvres.

Militant separatism has become one of the main threats to international peace and security after the cold war period. Totalitarian regimes have engendered ethnic conflicts and frictions in certain countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Some conflicts are rooted in age-old animosities. Others, as is the case in the conflict involving the Republic of Moldova which broke out five years ago, are inspired by and supported from the outside, in order to recreate a form of by-gone domination.

This is the reason why I would like to emphasize the fact that the recent separatist trends which have appeared in the newly independent States who are Members of the United Nations have nothing in common with the legitimate aspiration of peoples to achieve self-determination. In our view, attempts to construe the right to self-determination as the right of an ethnic or national community to establish its own government and to splinter off are real dangers to international and regional security. Moreover, the right to self-determination is treated in the Charter of the United Nations as a principle which cannot serve to justify the violation of the principle of the independence and territorial integrity of a State. Nevertheless, it is imperative to define this principle of self-determination more precisely in order to avoid any subjective interpretations.

It is quite clear that the stability of small and large States hinges on a number of factors, such as the rule of law, respect for human rights, democracy and economic development. Our Government is therefore striving to establish an equitable social system based on the respect for the dignity of the human person. And yet, the process of economic reform, with all its inherent problems, is retarding the achievement of these objectives.

The high social costs of transition are felt throughout society. Despite all of these difficulties, we are

nevertheless determined to continue the process of economic reform. We rely on the support of developed countries, the United Nations and other international agencies and organizations during this decisive moment in the reform of our country. I take this opportunity to express the gratitude of the people and Government of my country to those States and international institutions which have supported the strengthening of democracy and market-economy mechanisms in our Republic. Furthermore, I note with satisfaction that my country has made progress in building its civil society and in establishing democratic institutions.

Nevertheless, it is a paradox that under such favourable conditions we have not succeeded in achieving a final settlement of the conflict which broke out in the summer of 1992. Yet, the authorities of the Republic of Moldova endeavour to find pragmatic solutions in order to maintain the integrity of the country.

Following negotiations with the leaders of the separatist region, and with the mediation of the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, an agreement was reached between the parties involved with regard to the general principles of the settlement of the dispute. A memorandum was likewise signed on the normalization of relations between the authorities of the Republic of Moldova and the Transdnestrian region.

At the same time, the Presidents of Ukraine and the Russian Federation and the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) signed a joint Declaration emphasizing the importance of the parties' commitment in the memorandum to conduct their relations in the context of the existing borders of the country by granting special status to the eastern region of the Republic of Moldova.

In view of the provisions of the memorandum, an ad hoc commission was established to negotiate the legal status of the Transdnester region. To our regret, negotiations in the Commission are deadlocked because of the intransigent and highly politicized position taken by the Transdnester side. Therefore, no mutually acceptable solution has been found on the key elements for resolving the dispute, namely, the legal definition of the status of Transdnester and the powers of the parties during the transitional period. In opposing the provisions of the accord, the Transdnester side insists on a settlement which runs counter to the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova and is prejudicial to the principle of sovereignty

over the territory of the country. Despite the commitments they assumed by signing the memorandum, the separatist leaders have, exceeding their power, enacted certain unconstitutional laws establishing a so-called customs border in Transdniestria and a "commission for the delimitation of the State border in the region". In addition, a series of unlawful acts have been committed in the area controlled by the peacekeeping forces.

I must therefore emphasize that it is vital to ensure more active mediation by the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the OSCE mission, as well as stronger action by the international community, led by the United Nations. I should like to say the conflict in Transdniestria could destabilize the political and military situation, and threatens subregional and regional peace and security. We know that the separatist regime in Transdniestria is supported by a powerful paramilitary force having the most modern weapons, obtained from the equipment available to forces of the Russian Federation illegally stationed on our territory. At the same time, the leaders of those opposed to constitutional authority are trying to obtain weapons belonging to the Russian military forces, while opposing the complete withdrawal of the troops of the Russian Federation and their weapons. It must therefore be pointed out that disarming and breaking up the Transdniestria paramilitary groups is as important as the withdrawal of Russian troops.

Both those processes must be monitored by international observers. We have reached the conclusion that an immediate and effective solution to this conflict requires more active involvement by international bodies as well as the countries of the region and even the major Powers. We are awaiting such involvement, for our recent experience demonstrates that all attempts made by the authorities of the Republic of Moldova to settle the conflict in the Transdniestria region through dialogue and negotiations have failed. The interests of the separatist leaders are subordinate to other interests, entirely political, going beyond our national context.

There is a danger that the conflict will continue indefinitely. We believe that the problem of the eastern region of the Republic of Moldova could already have been resolved by peaceful means and in a civilized fashion if the separatist regime did not receive strong support from outside. More often than not such support has been given deliberately, for reasons of geopolitical interests, but sometimes the separatists in the eastern region of the Republic of Moldova have received unintentional, indirect support through the unlawful trade activities of companies and firms in developed countries. We hope that the Governments of countries where certain undertakings are giving political and technical support to the separatist

regime in Transdniestria will put an end to such activity. These actions can no longer be tolerated for they constitute *ipso facto* direct interference in the internal affairs of the Republic of Moldova.

The illegal stationing of military contingents of the Russian Federation on the territory of my country continues. The deadline set by the 1994 Moldovan-Russian Agreement on the withdrawal of Russian troops from the territory is 21 October 1997. The fact that for three years the State Duma, unlike our Parliament, has failed to ratify the Agreement cannot be excused or explained. We have been assured on several occasions, at the highest level, that the question of the withdrawal of troops will be settled, and it is regrettable that this problem remains unresolved.

We understand, of course, that the failure to ratify the 1994 Accord by the State Duma entails legal complications for the Russian Government. However, we believe that the time has come to find a solution to the question of troop withdrawal. In accordance with the principles of international law, no foreign army can be stationed on the territory of another State without its free consent. In addition, international organizations, particularly the OSCE, strongly support the unconditional, immediate, orderly and complete withdrawal of Russian troops from the territory of the Republic of Moldova. Finally, Russia's admission to the Council of Europe as a fully fledged member, was conditional on the timely withdrawal of its troops from the territory of the Republic of Moldova.

We believe that the political forces in the State Duma opposing troop withdrawal will also be sensitive to the legal commitments of the Russian Federation. We hope that the removal of armaments and the withdrawal of troops from the territory of the Republic of Moldova will be speeded up and completed as soon as possible. This course would certainly serve the interests of both countries and would properly reflect the high level reached in the development of relations between the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation.

In conclusion, I express the fervent hope that the work of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly will take place in a climate of solidarity, with a realistic and constructive approach to the complex problems facing the world at the end of this century. My delegation, like those of other Member States, is ready to make its contribution to achieve the purposes of the United Nations.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.



General Assembly

Fifty-second Session

16th plenary meeting

Monday, 29 September 1997, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Udovenko (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Address by General Hugo Banzer Suárez, Constitutional President of the Republic of Bolivia

The President: The Assembly will first hear an address by the Constitutional President of the Republic of Bolivia.

General Hugo Banzer Suárez, Constitutional President of the Republic of Bolivia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the Constitutional President of the Republic of Bolivia, His Excellency General Hugo Banzer Suárez, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Banzer Suárez (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me to convey the congratulations of the Government and the people of Bolivia to you, Mr. President. Your well-deserved election is fitting recognition of your work and prestige.

Allow me also to commend the work of Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, who so ably conducted the deliberations of the previous session of the General Assembly.

Finally, my congratulations go as well to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, whose contributions to the cause of

world peace and cooperation have earned him the unanimous gratitude of the Member States of this Organization.

All the countries of Latin America, in one way or another and each at its own pace, have put long decades of ideological confrontation and economic crisis behind them. They have opened their markets, controlled inflation, reduced the deficit and privatized public enterprises. They have rebuilt their democratic institutional structures on new foundations, with new protagonists, and restarted the process of growth.

However, old structural adjustment problems, aggravated by the period of crisis, have surfaced. Clearly the most important of these is the inequitable distribution of income and its results: exclusion, poverty, violence and social fragmentation. Such inequities have created ever-greater gaps between the immensely rich and those who have barely enough to survive. There are no social security systems to protect the dispossessed, to cushion their fall and rehabilitate them so that they can live a productive life. For this reason, the potential for violence and discontent on our continent is growing larger and more dangerous.

These factors aside, however, Latin America meets all of the necessary conditions to forge ahead and grow in that it has the capacity and courage to continue to change — to increase society's store of knowledge, create new competitive advantages, eliminate internal marginalization, reduce extreme poverty, rebuild the



State, and speak with its own voice in the world political community.

Education stands out as a vital precondition for all of these goals. Without a far-reaching revolution in the area of education, we will not be able to achieve these goals or meet the challenges of our time.

Today, Latin America is no longer asking others for what it cannot do on its own. Proof of this is the significant progress recently made in strengthening mechanisms for economic integration, such as the Andean Group and the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR). The region is also taking a different approach in its relations with the economically advanced countries. The old defensive and mistrustful attitude has yielded to the conviction that it is necessary to merge Latin America's economy into the contemporary current of productive and technological development, attract investments and open its markets to its products while preserving its identity, upholding its values and attending to its interests, without for an instant losing sight of the fact that the key to its strength lies in its own markets and in its resources.

Let me reiterate Bolivia's concern about landmines. It is incomprehensible that those very same borders across which we are seeking to promote trade and integration should be sown with devices of war that endanger the civilian population and threaten their fundamental rights. We are convinced that the Governments of the region directly affected by the problem will find a way to resolve it.

This matter is of particular and direct relevance to Bolivia, due to the well-known and acknowledged fact that Chile has laid a significant number of mines along our common border. Removal of those mines is of the utmost urgency, in keeping with the commitments entered into in Oslo, the dictates of morality and the imperative of the spirit of integration that should prevail between neighbouring nations. Avoidance of this topic is not the attitude that the international community wishes to see. What is needed is firm resolve and the sincere will to contribute to peace between countries that must impart a sense of solidarity to their borders.

Since the early days of its independence, Bolivia has rejected the use of force and the arms race as an instrument of its foreign policy. We have the moral authority, therefore, to condemn those commercial interests that seek to foster the procurement of war *matériel*, thereby

compromising what we have achieved so far in terms of preserving peace on the continent.

I have sought to describe the process of change in Latin America in order to show the extent to which developments in each of our countries are part of a broader and more comprehensive historical trend. However, Bolivia's transformation has its own particular features. Following a lengthy process of social confrontation, we have restored democracy and economic freedoms in Bolivia. In a spirit of respect for human rights and freedoms, we have given full support to the political system and fuelled the economic growth and development that prevail today in Bolivia. It should be underscored that this was a peaceful reconstruction process — the result of democratic dialogue.

My Government, the product of a mandate of the people, represents more than 70 per cent of the Bolivian electorate. Nonetheless, we must continue to move forward and broaden the scope of dialogue and consensus, involving social institutions and their leaders in the task of identifying the main objectives of development in Bolivia as well as the broad outlines of our strategy for the twenty-first century. That is the purpose of the national dialogue that I have recently called for, which has the support of all the political parties — Government and opposition; the church; private enterprise; and farmers and workers.

Of course, this new country we are building is looking to the future from a different perspective and with a sense of renewed confidence. The time has come to reaffirm Bolivia's role on our continent — its role as a crossroads and as a land of contacts, at the juncture of the great basins and the great cultures of America. Bolivia's key geographical position may become one of its major comparative advantages and an essential element in enhancing the country's international stature.

However, this is not yet a reality. It is a task that remains to be accomplished, a promise that remains to be fulfilled. To this end, Bolivia will need to rebuild its maritime capacity; reduce the transportation cost of its products; and create a modern export sector and connect it with the Pacific and the Atlantic. We must see and understand our country as a part of the continent.

Bolivia's association with MERCOSUR is not only the result of a desire to cultivate a historical friendship but also a consequence of the concrete needs of Bolivian development. The exceptional growth in the eastern areas

of Bolivia calls for a more intense and productive relationship with our neighbours on the Atlantic.

That effort coincides with one of the most impressive development ventures in the history of America, which is taking place now on the territories of Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, Argentina and Uruguay. Investments and technology must be allowed to flow freely in that region. We must set up a genuine common market, a multinational development project, around this potential, which should also promote the integration of our countries into the world economy. It is well known that the Paraguay-Paraná waterway is the natural route linking the area.

That major project, however, has already gone beyond the imagination of the visionaries and the negotiating tables of the diplomats. It is now in the hands of engineers and workers. After more than 30 years of efforts, construction has begun on the Santa Cruz-San Pablo-Curitiba gas pipeline, the first segment of a network of energy distribution for which Bolivia's territory provides the crossroads. This is one of the largest engineering projects in the history of the region. It will stretch for more than 3,000 kilometres, will carry more than 7 billion cubic feet of natural gas over 20 years and will require a total investment of nearly \$5 billion.

Bolivia's very existence is directly tied to the Pacific. Accordingly, we have been following with great interest the process of consolidating the vast potential of the Andean community. That potential is also found in our immediate vicinity. The economies of Bolivia, Peru and Chile are complementary.

Our territories are not only markets, but avenues for integration. The territories of Peru and Chile hold Bolivia's gateway to the Pacific, while that of Bolivia opens up communication between those nations and the vast interior of the continent.

I must stress, however, that the reality still falls far short of the potential. The reason for this is to be found in a war that took place just over 100 years ago, and whose adverse consequences continue to be felt in the relations between our countries. Undoubtedly, the most unjust and serious of those consequences is the geographical enclosure imposed upon Bolivia.

Bolivia's demand to return to the Pacific Ocean, with sovereign rights and a coastline of its own cannot be renounced. It is a vital condition for our national development but, above all, a historical claim that cannot

be compromised. The recovery of our maritime access, temporarily lost, is an essential condition for fulfilling our continental role as a crossroads and a point of convergence. My country will turn to the international community as many times as necessary in order to call attention to a problem that has already been deemed a matter of permanent hemispheric interest in the light of its many implications for continental security and harmony. Despite everything, my Government, as always, remains ready to explore avenues of constructive dialogue with an open mind.

Illicit drug trafficking unjustly distorts the reality of Bolivia and affects and interferes with the proper conduct of external cooperation. Bolivia itself has done a great deal to contain this problem. It has not permitted drug trafficking to taint beyond repair its economic, institutional and political structure. And it has done so peacefully, without resorting to violence. Nevertheless, the stigma of drug trafficking exists, and while we are disturbed by the manner in which it is magnified, it would be a mistake to ignore it.

Accordingly, my Government has taken the decision to remove Bolivia from the drug-trafficking circuit within the term of my administration. We shall use dialogue and consultation with peasant producers of coca in order definitively to eradicate illegal crops. We shall be ruthless with the drug traffickers. We shall not give them a moment's rest until they have been for ever banned from the history of Bolivia.

Naturally, this is not an exclusively Bolivian problem, nor can our actions alone resolve the global and hemispheric problem of illegal trafficking in narcotics. It is a matter that concerns all and that requires everyone's commitment. Therefore, the time has come to reaffirm the principles of shared responsibility. The characteristics and scope of this problem mean that it cannot be faced effectively through isolated efforts. It undeniably calls for resolute action by all countries, especially those affected by consumption and who have sufficient economic resources to combat this terrible evil.

My country reaffirms its commitment to the peace process in the Middle East in keeping with the principles and values that guide harmonious coexistence between peoples. However, given the resurgence of tensions and new acts of confrontation, we call upon the parties not to go back on the commitments already made. That is the firm answer for maintaining peace in the region.

In another vein, Bolivia has received with satisfaction the Secretary-General's initiative proposing a broad programme of reforms in the United Nations system. We feel it is essential to strengthen the role of the Secretariat. We reiterate the importance of the process of expansion and reform of the Security Council with a view to correcting present imbalances, guaranteeing equitable and non-discriminatory geographical distribution, improving its decision-making mechanisms and making it an organ that can take action in a manner that is increasingly legitimate and representative of the countries that make up the United Nations. Bolivia shares the view that we should move towards the elimination of the veto, limiting its use in the interim to issues considered under Chapter VII of the Charter.

Bolivia reiterates its commitment to the principles that have guided global solidarity for more than 50 years. We Bolivians believe that there can be no relinquishing of the standards that establish mutual respect and the sovereign equality of States, regardless of their size or level of development. Nor can we surrender the principles of peaceful settlement of disputes, the inviolability and integrity of territories and respect for self-determination of peoples that wish to preserve their own systems of life and Government, free from threats.

If there is a lesson to be learned from the experience of the century now drawing to a close, it is the versatility of the human endeavour. Mankind has an incorrigible tendency to make mistakes, but also a talent for correcting them and for building from the rubble the new portals of freedom and faith.

With the approach of the new millennium, at an hour that is both dusk and dawn, we must look upon the events of the world from the dual perspective of humility and hope.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Constitutional President of the Republic of Bolivia for the statement he has just made.

General Hugo Banzer Suárez, Constitutional President of the Republic of Bolivia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (continued)

General debate

The President: The next speaker on my list is His Excellency Mr. Martin Andjaba, Chairman of the delegation of Namibia. I give him the floor.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): I congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. We have no doubt that your diplomatic tact will steer the deliberations of this important session to a fruitful conclusion. My delegation will lend you its full cooperation as you embark on the difficult task ahead of you.

Let me now pay tribute to His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail, your predecessor, who conducted our work during the fifty-first session in a highly remarkable manner.

Our tribute goes also to the former Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his distinguished leadership during his tenure. We are most grateful to him for his tireless efforts in upholding the objectives of the Organization.

The present Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, hails from a country that paved the road towards freedom and national independence in our part of the world. The first leader of his country, Mr. Kwame Nkrumah, was a main catalyst in Africa's fight against colonial domination. We have no doubt that all these attributes, together with his long-standing experience in the affairs of the United Nations, will contribute to the revitalization and democratization of the Organization. We congratulate him on his election as Secretary-General, and we assure him of our full support and cooperation.

At the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, world leaders recaptured the vision of the founding fathers of our Organization. They did so in recognition of the need to map out the institutional framework and operational parameters necessary to forge the effectiveness and continued relevance of the United Nations in this ever-changing international arena. It is that momentum that must be the driving force in our quest for a reformed, revitalized and democratized United Nations.

Reform is a process. As long as the United Nations exists and the world continues to change, reform will be necessary. Namibia therefore welcomes the Secretary-General's report of 16 July 1997 on the reform of the United Nations. Let me place on record that Namibia welcomes and supports reform which enhances the

capacity of the United Nations to effectively address the critical development concerns of developing countries. In this context, let me emphasize that we attach utmost importance to the operational activities of the United Nations, for they complement our development efforts. Any reform in this area must strengthen their scope of excellence. As the Secretary-General rightly puts it in his report on the work of the Organization, "times of transformation can be times of confusion" [A/52/I, para. 20]. Managerial issues, therefore, must not and cannot be confused with policy matters. We have long recognized that it is the General Assembly that is best equipped by the Charter to provide the necessary representative leadership. And this authority of the General Assembly my delegation shall seek to uphold.

Reform must not be retrogressive. It must continue to enhance and build on those gains we have made over the years. And, therefore, savings to be realized from reform measures should be channelled — and rightly so — to

"the Organization's highest priority, alleviating poverty and enhancing the prospects of developing countries". [A/51/950, *letter of transmittal*]

The recent reform proposals by the Secretary-General are, in our view, part of an ongoing process. We must not resist change; nor should we lose sight of the long-term implications of our actions of today. We need to do it now, but we must do it right.

In his address to the General Assembly, the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), President Robert Mugabe, reiterated the position of the OAU on the reform and democratization of the Security Council. Let me supplement his remarks by emphasizing that Namibia is opposed to categories of permanent membership of the Security Council. As we continue to seek ways and means to reform the Security Council, we must not replace a speedy process with haste. Hence, the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council should be the forum to search for and reach a consensus on the matter.

What besets the United Nations today is not merely an unmanageable structure. The Organization is subjected to financial limitations. Reform cannot supplant the Charter obligation of Member States to honour their financial obligations. Voluntary contributions, therefore, must not be seen as a means to pave the way towards resolving the

current financial crisis. My Government welcomes the idea of the establishment of a revolving credit fund, capitalized at a level of up to \$1 billion through voluntary contributions or through other appropriate means which may be agreed. However, our Organization can execute its mandate to the fullest only when all Member States equip it to do so. We all must honour our assessed contributions in line with international agreements, not in line with unilateral decisions.

The creation of a development account is viewed by my Government as a good idea. However, all mandated programmes and activities should be implemented, including reimbursement to troop contributors for United Nations peacekeeping operations. Furthermore, any reduction in posts must not compromise the effectiveness of the United Nations; more important, it must be carried out on the basis of geographical equity.

Since 1996 we have witnessed positive progress in the field of disarmament. A Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has been concluded, and the Chemical Weapons Convention has come into force. In addition, an agreement was reached by the parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction to intensify efforts to negotiate verification provisions. However, despite these developments, nuclear weapons and their proliferation continue to be a cause of concern to the international community. With the conclusion of the CTBT, it is still our hope that serious negotiations will begin on the elimination of nuclear weapons.

In this connection, we call upon the nuclear-weapon States to undertake, within the shortest possible time frame, to carry out effective nuclear disarmament measures. The total elimination of these weapons is the only genuine guarantee for non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Namibia is among many countries still facing the bitter experience of the effects of landmines, which have claimed and continue to claim human lives, and which pose serious obstacles to the reconstruction and development process. Thus, we support the international community's move towards a total ban on the use of anti-personnel landmines and its continuous and tireless efforts across the globe to clear minefields.

In this connection, we welcome the treaty recently concluded in Oslo, Norway, to ban anti-personnel

landmines. Namibia is ready to sign the treaty in Ottawa. Let me express our profound gratitude and great appreciation to those countries which are supporting Namibia's demining activities, thus enhancing our development prospects.

Our world is merging into one globally encompassing dynamo of change, or so it is perceived, characterized by *inter alia* economic integration. Are developing countries to become victims or beneficiaries of this process? Suffice it to emphasize that globalization and liberalization are not ends in themselves. They are means to greater efficiency, higher growth and increased welfare. It is common knowledge that the much talked about benefits of globalization and liberalization of the world economy continue to elude the majority of developing countries, particularly those in Africa. At the same time, while the debt burden continues to hamper many of the development efforts of our economies, official development assistance is on the decline. Instead, new and innovative ideas for generating funds for globally agreed commitments and priorities are being brought into play, some of which are clearly shifting the overall burden of financing development to the developing countries which already have limited financial resources.

Namibia is strongly of the view that if the twin process of globalization and liberalization of the world economy is to benefit all countries, developing countries must have free access to world markets without conditions. It should not be a matter of the survival of the fittest. The limitations of many of our countries to compete should be compensated for by maintaining preferential treatment of developing countries.

Much has been said about global development trends, of Africa's efforts to carve a larger slice of the world economic cake, of our striving for economic empowerment and competitiveness, of our movement towards regional integration and harmonization, and of our efforts to put in place an enabling environment for trade, investment and capital flows on a national and regional level.

At the same time, at the recent International Monetary Fund Economic Forum it was said that over the decade spanning 1985 to 1995 developing countries increased their share of world trade from 23 per cent to 29 per cent. They also diversified their trade linkages in response to major changes in trade and exchange regimes in the direction of more outward-looking and open policies.

While it is stated that developing countries have more than doubled their real per capita income over the last 30 years, in reality only Asia has made relative progress; thus, the gap in living standards between the advanced economies and Africa continues to widen.

The distribution of gains from increases in both trade and foreign direct investment remains very skewed, with a few getting the most. Africa still participates in world trade with foreign direct investment flows of less than 4 per cent.

Therefore, as we continue to welcome the bright projected global outlook, we should not lose sight of the wide divergence across nations and regions. Today, for many African nations, global optimism coexists with local pessimism. There is a need, then, to open and expand our economies, to increase our competitiveness, to empower our people and to improve their well-being. To this end, the international community should support Africa's need to effectively participate in multilateral trade discussions, with a strengthened capacity for negotiations in such forums. Full implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa is one effective way of addressing Africa's limited capacity to take advantage of the global outlook.

We in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have long recognized that the path to globalization is regional integration. To equalize power relationships in the global setting, regional integration is a strategic imperative. To this end, all the members of SADC have embarked upon a common strategy to promote the region as an attractive trading and investment partner, and they are actively working towards: deeper economic cooperation and integration on the basis of balance, equity and mutual respect, providing for cross-border investment, trade and movement of production factors and services; common economic, political and social value systems, enhancing entrepreneurship, competitiveness, democracy, good governance, rule of law, human rights and the eradication of poverty; and strengthened regional solidarity, peace and security.

While admittedly our region has not yet attracted a high share of foreign direct investment, political and economic risks have greatly reduced over the past years, and increasing trade and investment flows are being witnessed.

Namibia, as a member of SADC, believes in the region's potential, the opportunities for joint development and the power of collective advocacy. This will enhance efforts towards the ideals and objectives of the African Economic Community. Together we can strengthen our productivity and competitiveness in the global economy. By pooling our resources and skills, we can create a far greater market for all of us than any of our nations has.

For the accelerated development process of developing countries to take place, a strong industrial base is indispensable. In this regard, we continue to underscore the role of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), which is an agency with a clear, vital and indispensable mission. UNIDO has successfully carried out its reform, and this should be recognized and supported. At this juncture, let me express Namibia's great appreciation to the Government of the United Kingdom for its decision to rejoin UNIDO. We have no doubt that this exemplary decision will be rightly emulated by other Member States.

This year during the month of June major events were witnessed here at the United Nations. The adoption of the Agenda for Development and the review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21 are cases in point. We view the outcome of these two events as complementary. Neither replaces the other. The commitments we made in Rio remain valid and need full — not selective — implementation.

The United Nations has a major role to play in promoting international cooperation. It took the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly on an Agenda for Development four years to reach consensus. Mobilization of resources for its implementation is of the utmost importance, for those who are to benefit from it cannot wait another four years. Development must be one of the centrepieces of United Nations activities. In this context, we welcome the proposal to appoint a Deputy Secretary-General. In our view the Deputy Secretary-General should concentrate on United Nations development activities.

Namibia is one of those countries seriously affected by desertification and drought. In a few days, the first Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, will take place in Rome. We underscore the utmost importance of establishing an independent financial mechanism to make arrangements conducive to the

implementation of this Convention. To this end, we look forward with great expectation to the outcome of the first Conference of the Parties.

Namibia supports the establishment of an international criminal court, with its jurisdiction being limited to "hard-core crimes": crimes of genocide, serious violations of the laws and customs applicable in armed conflict and crimes against humanity. The principle of complementarity should be clearly spelled out in the statute. The international criminal court must complement and not supplant national criminal jurisdictions. A balance between the international criminal court and the national jurisdictions will therefore have to be struck in order to make the international criminal court fully functional.

We are two years from the end of this century and the beginning of a new millennium. We have the opportunity to reflect on how we have fared in elevating the human race to greater heights. In this context, my Government would like to congratulate both Mrs. Mary Robinson, the new High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Mr. Olara Otunnu, the Secretary-General's Special Representative to study the impact of armed conflict on children. Both of them have challenging responsibilities to assist Member States in very important but difficult tasks.

In 1998 we will commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Government and people of Namibia have embraced the Universal Declaration of Human Rights inasmuch as our Constitution embodies those principles and values that we were denied for so long and that we will cherish and pass on to new generations to come. Furthermore, 1998 will mark the fifth anniversary of the World Conference on Human Rights. This will be a time to reflect and to rededicate ourselves to our collective responsibility to save successive generations from the scourge of massive and grave human rights violations.

It is also our responsibility to redouble our efforts towards the implementation of the Declaration on the Right to Development as well as to pay equal attention to the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights.

No country has been spared the onslaught of drug trafficking and the alarming geographical spread of organized crime in its various forms. This undermines our development process and threatens human rights and

fundamental freedoms, and thus causes regression in the quality of our lives. In this context, my Government supports the convening of the special session of the General Assembly on the question of drugs next year. This will provide the international community with an ample opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to combat this global problem.

Time and again we have all affirmed the link between peace and development. In this context, we are pleased that the United Nations has decided to discuss the concept of the "culture of peace" during this session of the General Assembly. We support the current efforts before the United Nations for a comprehensive strategy to be adopted towards this end.

My delegation remains deeply perturbed by the situation in Angola. In this regard, we feel strongly that the phasing out of a United Nations presence in Angola must hinge on the situation on the ground. The United Nations Observer Mission in Angola was established to keep the peace in that country. It should not break the fragile peace through premature withdrawal. In this respect, the commitment of the parties to the full and unconditional implementation of the Lusaka Protocol is paramount. UNITA must therefore rise above the present impasse to contribute to a final and lasting solution to the problem in Angola.

We commend the Secretary-General's efforts in the Republic of Congo, and we are keeping our hopes alive for a speedy resolution to that problem.

We welcome the new Government in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we call upon the international community to render all necessary assistance to the Government and people of that country as they embark on the road to national reconciliation and reconstruction.

After seven years of tragic civil war in Liberia, my delegation hails the peace which has finally dawned in that country. It is our hope that it will be a lasting peace. We salute the people of Liberia for their good sense. Peace cannot sustain itself. It is therefore incumbent upon the international community to support the Government and people of Liberia in their national reconciliation and reconstruction efforts to keep and consolidate peace and stability.

Our hearts bleed when we consider the situation that has unfolded in Sierra Leone, which has been responsible for the regression of the reconstruction efforts in that

country. The Government of the Republic of Namibia condemned the *coup d'état* in Sierra Leone then and does so now. Namibia calls for the continued isolation of the military regime in that country. We therefore welcome the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

We note with satisfaction the progress made during the recent negotiations between the parties on Western Sahara. We encourage them to continue to search for a final solution to that problem. We reiterate our call for the early exercise by the Sahraoui people of their right to self-determination on the basis of a free, fair and transparent referendum in Western Sahara, under the joint supervision and control of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

We reiterate the concern of the OAU about the conflict between Libya and the United States of America and the United Kingdom over the Lockerbie tragedy. While we regret the loss of life as a result of this tragedy, other innocent people continue to suffer as a result of the subsequent sanctions imposed on Libya. We call for an urgent solution to this problem.

The Government of Namibia has reiterated on many occasions that the United States of America and the Republic of Cuba should start to walk the distance of 90 miles towards reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. We hoped to see our aspirations come about. However, these aspirations are being shattered by the new escalation in the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba through the application of the Helms-Burton Act. Notwithstanding this, we shall keep our hopes alive.

The construction of new settlements in the occupied territories of Palestine is not conducive to peace in the Middle East. We therefore call on the Government authorities in Israel to desist from such acts. Peace in the Middle East is in the interest of all parties concerned. We call on the parties to resume negotiations.

Let me conclude by stating the obvious: Peace is cheaper than war. Let us all unite our efforts to make the world a haven of peace.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Domingo L. Siazon, Jr., Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines.

Mr. Siazon (Philippines): I am pleased to extend to you, Sir, on behalf of my delegation, our most sincere felicitations on your election to the presidency of the fifty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly.

We also wish to congratulate His Excellency Tan Sri Razali Ismail, our colleague in the Assembly and our partner in the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), for his strong leadership as the President of the fifty-first session.

We take great pleasure in congratulating His Excellency Secretary-General Kofi Annan. We commit ourselves to working with him for the improvement of our Organization.

Next year the Philippines will commemorate the centenary of its proclamation of independence. Next year also the Philippines is scheduled to conduct the most sacred exercise that democracy requires: electing national leaders through the popular will. As we mark our first century as the first Republic to arise in Asia, and as we prepare to choose those who will lead our country into the twenty-first century, we reflect on what we have achieved as a country and as a member of our community of nations. Today peace reigns in my country. Where there was strife, there is now national reconciliation. Where there was violent rebellion, there is now progress and hope.

Last year, with the wisdom and guidance of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), in particular the OIC's Committee of Six, under the enlightened leadership of Indonesia and with the active support of Libya, the Philippine Government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) concluded a historic agreement that brought peace to Mindanao after more than a quarter century of open secessionist rebellion. The leader of the MNLF is now the elected Governor of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao and Chairman of the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development. MNLF fighters are now being integrated into the armed forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police.

Indeed, there is much for us to celebrate as a nation and as a Republic. And this gives us even greater reason to reflect on the world and to ask ourselves fundamental questions about its present state and its emerging future.

One such question that comes to mind is this: Is our world a safer place? The end of the cold war has in a sense made it so. But is the world safe enough when we continue to live under the threat posed by weapons of mass

destruction? Fortunately, the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty last year and the ongoing review of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons give us some added security.

We must not stop here. Let us pursue negotiations on the complete and total elimination of nuclear weapons by a certain time. This call is already supported by the International Court of Justice, which last year recognized that all States have an obligation to pursue such negotiations in good faith.

On 27 March 1997 the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty entered into force. On that day, the world of nuclear weapons became much smaller. We now urge the nuclear-weapon States to support the Treaty by becoming parties to its Protocol. At this session we will once again consider the initiative of consolidating existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and of promoting cooperation among them with a view to the total elimination of such weapons.

Global safety also demands control of the proliferation of conventional arms, particularly small arms and anti-personnel landmines, whether deployed or in national stockpiles. In Oslo earlier this month the Ottawa process produced, after less than a year, the text of a treaty banning anti-personnel landmines. We will sign this treaty in December. We will also continue to support the noble efforts of the Organization, of individual Governments and of non-governmental organizations to clear minefields, to assist mine victims and to rehabilitate areas plagued by these infernal devices.

At the dawn of the post-cold-war era, we must acknowledge that the potential for the most serious conflict has shifted almost entirely from the global to the regional level. In the Asia-Pacific region, the Association of South-East Asian Nations, in response to this new reality, has led in creating the ASEAN Regional Forum, a ministerial-level, multilateral forum for promoting regional-security dialogue and cooperation. Today in the Asia-Pacific region dialogue and cooperation are the pre-eminent modes for securing peace.

However, the disputes in the South China Sea remain a source of tension for our region. In 1992, ASEAN issued, at Manila, a Declaration on the South China Sea, which called for the settlement of disputes exclusively by peaceful means and for the exercise of self-restraint by all of the claimants. Other States have

endorsed this Declaration. We are determined to advance towards a settlement of these disputes in conformity with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, while avoiding all acts inimical to stability and a sense of security in the region.

Like many here, we were saddened by the recent events in the political life of Cambodia. We in ASEAN have initiated a dialogue to address the Cambodian issue, even as we look forward to the early admission of Cambodia into the ASEAN family.

On the Korean peninsula, we hope that the current talks will lead not only to large dividends of peace but also to greater cooperation towards economic growth and progress for East Asia.

In South Africa, following the collapse of apartheid, we are witnessing bold and sincere efforts towards deeper national reconciliation. In other parts of Africa we see active regional cooperation to promote peace and justice in the aftermath of terrible conflicts. In Liberia, in particular, we welcome the holding of free and fair elections with the support of the international community, led by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

In the Middle East, peace is gravely imperilled by terrorism and political aggression. We call on all parties to renounce all forms of violence and intimidation to preserve the peace process that was begun only a few years ago to the applause of the whole world.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, where much remains to be done, we regret the deterioration of civil order and condemn the violence directed against United Nations personnel.

In Latin America, we welcome the honourable termination of the civil war that had raged in Guatemala for 36 years.

Is the world a safer place for the world itself? The environment of our planet is under threat. Our response must be to accelerate implementation of Agenda 21 in line with the programme adopted last June. As a priority, we must address the lack of financial resources, technology, know-how and international cooperation that inhibits the promotion of worldwide sustainable development.

This December we will meet again to discuss a legally binding instrument under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to control harmful

emissions. We must agree now on emission reduction targets, particularly for those who have emitted too much for far too long.

How safe, we should also ask, is the world for the individual human being? We can answer positively only when it becomes universally accepted that every human being has rights inherent in his or her person, and that all basic rights — political, civil, social and economic — must be in balanced harmony with one another. Thus, as long as human rights are violated, as long as the right to development is vitiated, as long as the rights of women are not fully respected, as long as people are traded like chattels, as long as migrant workers, especially women migrant workers, are abused and exploited, we cannot say that the world is a safer place for the individual human person.

We must protect our women. We must act on the decisions we reached in Beijing, and we must do more to deepen and broaden respect for the rights of women through the use of existing human rights agreements and mechanisms.

We must protect our children. We must effectively implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and we must append to this Convention a protocol that would organize global measures against child slavery, prostitution and pornography.

In addition, we call for universal adherence to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

The protection of human rights finds its most effective guarantees in democracy. Any threat to democracy also poses a direct and indirect threat to the rights of the human person. Today, in many countries, including my own, democracy is no longer endangered by the extreme political left or right. Rather, the threats to democracy are more base and more insidious. Among them are terrorism and the illicit traffic in narcotics.

With the objective of creating a regional consensus on how best to address the issue of illicit drugs and other transnational crimes, the Philippines will next year host the regional ministerial meeting for Asia and the Pacific on organized transnational crime and corruption. For this meeting, we hope to take inspiration from and add to the consensus achieved in the regional meetings held in Africa and Latin America.

Our efforts to make the world a safer place, and to safeguard the rights of the individual, would lose much of their meaning if we were unable to answer the basic question: have the opportunities for growth and economic progress improved?

The rising tide of globalization has brought unprecedented opportunities for the developed and developing worlds alike. The acceptance of market-oriented development and of free trade by an increasing number of developing nations has expanded their participation in the growth and commerce of the global economy. Yet the benefits of globalization remain unevenly distributed. Developing countries still suffer from the old problems of external debt and of protectionism in developed-country markets.

The recent currency turbulence in East Asia, the region with the best long-term growth prospects in the world, is a sobering reminder that globalization can cause instability even where it has generated the greatest growth. The existence of unbridled international speculation and of other market ills that hinder rather than help development is a powerful rationale for strengthening the United Nations role in global development.

Only in the United Nations can we work to share, among rich and poor nations alike, the burden of structural adjustment imposed by globalization. Only within the United Nations system can we mobilize concerted global action to support progress in the poor regions of the globe, particularly in Africa, whose needs call for special attention.

The Bretton Woods system and the multilateral development banks also need reform. Global flows of multilateral development financing have to be increased, especially since bilateral official development assistance is declining.

Countries that wish to reduce their share in the financing of the United Nations should be willing to do the same in international financial institutions, so that those that want to increase their contributions to these institutions are able to do so without hindrance.

Another fundamental question we must ask is: are we ready, as an Organization of States, as nations united, to face the challenges of tomorrow? The short answer is "No".

For this reason, the Philippines strongly believes that we must immediately embark upon the reform of the United Nations. We need to enhance the capacity of the world body to meet the exigencies of modern times. A fundamental objective of reform should be to restore development to the centre of the United Nations agenda.

The Philippines, therefore, endorses the recommendations of the Open-ended High Level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System. If properly implemented, they could render the General Assembly more effective in fulfilling its Charter responsibilities.

Our Secretary-General has given us a report on his own reform proposals. These deserve the serious consideration of the General Assembly. We appreciate the emphasis placed by the Secretary-General on development.

We also need to accelerate discussions on the reform of the Security Council. In this regard, we welcome the progress that has been made in clarifying and identifying the elements that must be negotiated if we are to move towards any expansion of the membership of the Council.

The Philippines favours the enlargement of the membership of the Council in order to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness. Security Council membership should be more representative of the world's developing regions and more reflective of modern global realities. New permanent members should enjoy the same rights as current permanent members. The use of the veto should be limited to actions under Chapter VII of the Charter.

Talking of reform is good. But our talk will lead nowhere if our Organization does not have the resources required to improve and revitalize itself. We survived the balance of terror of the cold war. Let us now work on balancing our cheque-books in the post-cold-war era. There is much irony in this. The end of the cold war should also have meant an end to the astronomical finances spent on deterrence. It might have been reasonable to expect that a fraction of those finances could now be shared to help the United Nations promote world peace, progress and prosperity.

Yet this is obviously not the case. The Secretary-General's proposed revolving credit fund of \$1 billion, to be financed through voluntary contributions or other means — if it materializes — may provide temporary

relief. However, there is a real danger that this proposal will encourage those in arrears to delay further their payments to the Organization.

The Philippines is in favour of reform. But reforming the United Nations should not be seen as an opportunity to hold our Organization to ransom. We are all in favour of reforming and strengthening the United Nations. But setting benchmarks of reform should not be a precondition for a Member State to pay its assessed contributions.

In the 100 years since my country declared its independence, war and occupation, dictatorship and partisan politics have at one time or another endangered our democracy. And in those eventful 100 years, we have cultivated certain insights that might prove relevant to us here today. We have learned, as a country, that we must cherish the ideals of democracy in all aspects of our national life, including in our dealings with other nations.

After my people emerged victorious in our last major battle with forces opposed to democracy over a decade ago, we resolved to share our experience with the rest of the world. Thus, we organized in Manila the first meeting of the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies (ICNRD) in 1988. From the 13 nations that first met in Manila, ICNRD has grown to 76 countries today. I congratulate Romania for its successful hosting of ICNRD's third meeting earlier this month.

Given the diversity of the membership of our Organization, it is not surprising that we may have some differences even on such fundamental issues as international peace, global development and the protection of the individual. However, I submit that, if our Organization is to function properly and if Member States are to relate to each other in an effective manner, then we must all follow certain basic principles and ideals. These principles and ideals are those that democracy has taught us. Let us work together with all the creative energy at our command and with the ideals of democracy as our guiding light.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Thailand, His Excellency Mr. Prachuab Chaiyasan.

Mr. Chaiyasan (Thailand): It is with great pleasure that my delegation extends to you, Sir, its sincere congratulations on your unanimous election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its current session. My delegation also wishes to take this opportunity to

express its deepest appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, for his exceptional leadership and creative energies during the past year. I also wish to congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the new dynamism which he has brought to the Organization since he took office last January.

This fifty-second session of the General Assembly takes place against the backdrop of transition and transformation in the world. The euphoria that came in the wake of the end of the cold war has given way to a sense of realism about the new, and no less formidable, challenges that confront us all in this era of globalization. The changes, led by technology and the globalization of business and information, seem endless and increasingly complex. Governments, meanwhile, face the daunting task of constantly trying to discern and adjust to the new order of international relations.

For all the changes, some legacies of the cold war are still very much with us. Nothing brings home this reality more than the unfortunate events unfolding in Cambodia. While the situation in Cambodia that confronts us today is very different from the one we faced before the signing of the Paris Peace Accord, finding a solution is no less difficult.

How can we deal with a conflict which is basically internal in character, particularly when our ability to influence events has become limited and we are overcome with the fatigue born of *déjà vu*? Clearly, we cannot turn our backs on Cambodia. But the reality is that we in Thailand and in the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), as well as the entire international community, can only be supportive to the extent that the Cambodians themselves are willing to give peace a chance.

Mrs. Eshmambetova (Kyrgyzstan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The situation in Cambodia reflects a peculiar aspect of this brave new age we are entering. Even as the world is being transformed by sweeping global trends, some problems are so deep-rooted that they resist even the best efforts of the international community. The United Nations, no stranger itself to intractable conflicts, will continue to be one of our best hopes for resolving such situations.

While tending to such traditional challenges, the United Nations must also address the many complex new challenges brought on by the process of globalization. Indeed, globalization has come to mean different things to different people. To many, it holds out the promise of an unprecedented era of progress and prosperity. To its proponents, globalization has unleashed the forces of creativity and productivity in the world economy. Globalization has been heralded for having spread the ideas and values of democracy and freedom worldwide.

On the other hand, there are those who contend that globalization has become an all-embracing pretext for the imposition of certain sets of ideas and values. They see globalization as leading to a monopoly of economic power in the hands of a ruthless few whose sole allegiance is to the workings of market forces, while the vast majority of humanity is increasingly marginalized.

The reality most likely lies somewhere between these two extreme views. The fact of the matter is that we must all develop the capacity to cope with the effects of globalization, both positive and negative. Even the more successful developing countries have not escaped the tremendous turmoil that integration into the global market can bring on, as evidenced by the currency crisis that Thailand and many other countries in South-East Asia are going through.

Thailand's recent experience suggests that to thrive under economic globalization, developing countries have to fully understand how market forces work and to adapt themselves accordingly. Thailand has learned that financial liberalization requires a high degree of discipline from both the public and private sectors. Also crucial is the need to be vigilant in improving prudential regulations. Moreover, a more comprehensive macroeconomic analysis is needed in order to improve the monitoring of current economic conditions.

But Thailand's basic strengths remain. Our economic fundamentals are still underscored by a remarkably high savings rate, relatively low inflation and a strong tradition of market-oriented policy framework. We are firm in our commitment to free and open markets. We are also active in promoting regional cooperation and economic liberalization through such frameworks as the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Free Trade Area, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council and various subregional development schemes.

Moreover, we are firm in our determination to achieve good governance and greater democracy. This past Saturday, the Thai Parliament approved the new draft Constitution, which emphasizes transparency, accountability and the role of public participation.

Our political reform goes hand in hand with our economic reform. We realize that we can no longer put off economic restructuring if we are to get back on track quickly. We are therefore seriously implementing the conditions of the International Monetary Fund rescue package. We are also working with the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank to restructure our financial system, enhance our export competitiveness and return the economy to its long-term sustainable growth through necessary reforms of the civil service, privatization, industrial restructuring and the upgrading of the quality of our workforce, our technology and our infrastructure.

I prefer to think of this crisis as a blessing in disguise. While we have done many things right in the past — including progressive industrialization and liberalization of international trade and investment — with the benefit of hindsight, the macroeconomic capability to cope with an increasingly open capital market was inadequate. Globalization of business and finance compels us to become more competitive through greater openness and transparency. Our economy is too deeply integrated into the international economic system to do anything less. We cannot fight the market; what we must do is ensure that the market works efficiently and equitably.

At the same time, Thailand's experience also shows that the United Nations has an important role to play in coordinating macroeconomic policy at the global level. Closer cooperation and coordination is needed between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and major industrial countries to provide integrated support for the enhancement of capacity-building in those countries whose economies are still weak. Globalization of course has its winners and losers. The rules of the game should therefore take into account both the weaknesses and strengths of all countries concerned.

As a universal and multi-purpose Organization, the United Nations is the only institution in the world capable of forging a global partnership among States, big and small, rich and poor, powerful and weak. No single State or region can go it alone. This is why Thailand is committed to supporting the United Nations. This is why

Thailand welcomes the reform-action initiatives and proposals recently put forward by the Secretary-General. I hope that these measures will enable the United Nations to carry out its responsibilities with increased efficiency and effectiveness. I wish the Secretary-General well on the further implementation of these proposals.

Thailand attaches great importance to the strengthening of the role of the United Nations in promoting international cooperation for economic and social development. We are pleased that in his reform proposals Secretary-General Kofi Annan argued that the promotion of sustainable development should be the central priority of United Nations activities. While the reform plan proposed by the Secretary-General requires more thorough consideration, Thailand can support his proposal of designating the United Nations Development Group — comprising the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Population Fund — to supersede the sectoral group of development operations. We hope that the United Nations Development Group will facilitate consolidation and cooperation among United Nations agencies without compromising their identities, so that they can respond more effectively to the needs of developing countries.

Thailand also welcomes the creation of a development dividend by shifting resources from administration to development activities. According to the reform plan, the administrative costs will be reduced by one third, the workforce will be reduced by 1,000 posts and the paperwork will be cut by 30 per cent. However, downsizing should not be an end in itself. The central element of the reform should concentrate on how to manage funds and implement programmes so as to achieve equitable development, which is our common goal.

Another important point in the Secretary-General's reform plan is the proposal to mobilize more resources for United Nations operational activities. Thailand sees the United Nations as the main forum for the creation of an equal and workable partnership between developed and developing countries — a partnership that should be responsive to the needs and aspirations of the developing world. The steady decline in voluntary contributions to core resources has inhibited the capacity of United Nations funds and programmes to play the roles assigned to them. In this regard, we support the Secretary-General's proposal on innovative means of mobilizing new financial resources for development. The private sector is potentially an important source of financial support, as demonstrated by the proposed donation of \$1 billion by Mr. Ted Turner.

However, the funds from the private sector should be additional to, and must not replace, official development assistance.

The restructuring of the Security Council is also a vital part of United Nations reform. Despite the end of the cold war, the anachronistic yet so powerful veto power still exists in this supposedly more democratized institution. It is heartening, however, to note that the issue has been extensively debated. Thailand and its ASEAN partners, as well as the Non-Aligned Movement, believe that this veto power should be curtailed with a view to its eventual elimination. The Security Council itself should be expanded, taking into account the increase in United Nations membership to enhance its democratic and representative nature, while at the same time paying due regard to its efficiency and effectiveness.

But without the firm commitment of Member States, all these reform efforts would come to nothing. Member States have the obligation under the Charter to bear the expenses of the Organization by paying their assessed contributions in full on time and without conditions. Thailand has always taken its financial obligation seriously and has made every effort to fulfil it. For 1997 Thailand is among the 28 countries which paid their contributions to the regular budget in full and on time.

Thailand believes that one of the main tasks of the United Nations is to set standards in international law, and in recent years there has been an encouraging trend towards efforts to advance the cause of international law through the creation of legal norms and instruments. What these norms and instruments symbolize is the desire of peoples to live in a more orderly world. Thailand will continue to support and participate actively in efforts to establish an international criminal court, as well as in the elaboration of new legal instruments to combat terrorism. In December of this year, Thailand hopes to be one of the signatories of the Ottawa treaty banning all anti-personnel landmines. We believe that there is no greater crime than maiming or killing innocent civilians. It is high time that we put an end to this. At the same time, greater efforts and resources should be devoted to removing and destroying these landmines.

As a signatory of the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, which was concluded in Bangkok during the ASEAN summit in 1995, Thailand would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Governments of Central Asia for their initiative to establish a Central Asia nuclear-weapon-free zone. Their

commendable effort adds to the strong evidence that the peoples of the world are no longer tolerant of nuclear weapons. At present, more than 100 United Nations Member States are signatories of nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties in their respective regions, treaties which now cover the greater part of the world, including Latin America and the Caribbean, the South Pacific, Africa, South-East Asia and, soon, Central Asia. What we are witnessing here is a new partnership, a partnership among the peoples of the world who dread nuclear arsenals and wish to eliminate these hazardous weapons of mass destruction from the face of the earth.

The international environment in which we live is evolving rapidly. During the past year, there have been many encouraging developments. But we also find ourselves confronted with new and increasingly complex challenges. In order to overcome these challenges, the United Nations as an Organization needs vision and inventiveness. But, more importantly, its Members need to speak with one voice on issues which confront mankind. If we are to succeed in doing this, a global partnership needs to be forged, be it in the area of politics, economic and social development, environmental protection or humanitarian assistance. Sooner rather than later, we should all realize that, in this globalized world, our destinies are linked together much more closely than we like to believe. The time to forge this partnership is now. The place to begin the process is here, at the United Nations.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lebanon, His Excellency Mr. Fares Bouez.

Mr. Bouez (Lebanon) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me to extend our thanks to the outgoing President, Ambassador Razali Ismail, and to congratulate him on the way in which he fulfilled his mandate. I would also like to congratulate Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko on his election and wish him complete success in his efforts to strengthen and increase the effectiveness of the United Nations in these historic times, which more than ever demand our application, perseverance, determination and good faith.

More than half a century has elapsed since the United Nations was founded. When the United Nations was born, mankind wanted it to lead to the creation of a world of justice, law and peace. The United Nations was supposed to be able to defend human rights when they were violated and promote justice. By means of the United Nations, mankind aspired to put an end to an era of war and usher

in an era of peace and tolerance, of respect for national sovereignty and people's freedom and of independence of States; an era in which people would be free to fulfil their dreams and aspirations and to maintain their identity. Never in the course of human history have we needed the United Nations more than we need it today, in this era of communications and contacts, when frontiers are disappearing under the force of the technological revolution. This is an era of demographic explosion and deadly, destructive weapons; an era when the environment is no longer capable of meeting mankind's demands.

Today we are truly in need of a basic means of containing conflicts and resolving disputes. This is why we must increase the effectiveness of the United Nations mechanism and renew confidence in its justice, credibility and effectiveness, the freedom of its decision-making processes from hegemony, and the absence of imbalances in its measured ways and in the enforcement of its resolutions so that no one remains above international law. These steps are essential if we want to prevent the collapse of the United Nations, and if we want it to retain the moral authority necessary to resolve disputes and remain an alternative to hot and deadly confrontations.

Therefore, Lebanon enthusiastically supports the reform of United Nations institutions, particularly the Security Council. We call for enhancing the numerical and geographical balance of the Council so as to reflect changed realities. The Council must also be reformed to dissipate the misgivings some have about the way it performs its role.

Lebanon subscribes to the principle of rotation of the permanent seats in the Security Council. We reiterate our support for the position of the Arab Group, as expressed in the paper it presented on this subject.

We welcome the Secretary-General's proposals for the reform of the United Nations. We have given them our full attention and are carefully studying them. We believe it is necessary to enhance the role of the General Assembly and to make the issue of development a high priority for the Organization, while attaching great importance to the work of regional economic and social commissions.

Under the rubric of reducing costs and the budget, many United Nations agencies, in particular the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), have lost much of their

ability to adequately provide social, health and education services to refugees in their host countries. This increases the burden on host countries, Lebanon among them. It is difficult for us to shoulder these responsibilities under these conditions. The responsibility of the international community in redressing the injustice inflicted on the Palestinian refugees must be made apparent. This bitter reality, which cannot be free of hidden intentions, aims at times at attempting to pressure these countries and force them to assimilate the refugee population they are hosting. This would be a step towards liquidating the refugees' case for return. It is also a means of pressuring the host countries into accepting unacceptable political terms.

The international community, represented by the United Nations and the donor countries, is duty-bound to continue to render assistance to the Palestinian refugees awaiting a political resolution of their status in accordance with the right to return, as decided upon by the United Nations and, in particular, the principle of reuniting families. This is one of the pillars of the peace process, and thus it is essential that the international community persevere until a solution is attained.

We had hoped that this session would be an occasion for us to express our gratitude for the restoration of peace in Lebanon and the Middle East. This would have been an attestation to the success of the Madrid peace process, which was launched six years ago to which should be added one year of preparation. This international peace initiative began auspiciously. We believed in both its letter and its spirit because the initiative was international, the sponsorship was effective and the contents were based upon an equitable, just and permanent peace. We were very hopeful, because we thought that peace would be realized on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), on the basis of the principle of land for peace and on the basis of finding a consensual solution to the question of Jerusalem. The initiative was also supposed to put an end to Israel's building and expansion of settlements in the occupied territories and lead to the recognition of the political rights of the Palestinian people. It was supposed to be followed by a discussion of regional arrangements to settle security, social and economic questions, in particular the question of the Palestinian refugees, thereby paving the way for the economic development of the region.

We entered into the peace process convinced that the basic elements had been accepted at Madrid and that they had become commitments of the participating States. We thought that all that remained for the delegations was to

begin negotiations on implementation. However, the advent of the present Israeli Government and its head totally dashed our hopes, given the practices of this new Government. The principle of land for peace was thrown out, to be replaced by a new formula. The Israeli Government reneged on the need for implementation of international decisions, and thus demanded their reinterpretation. That Government did not want to find a solution to the question of Jerusalem, so it went ahead and annexed it. The Israeli Government reneged on its commitments with regard to the occupied Syrian Golan, so it stressed its annexation. The Israeli Government demolished the principle of halting settlement activities and vastly expanded their efforts at settlement.

The negotiated commitments of the previous Government were abandoned, as if there were no continuity from one Government to the next. Instead of making progress towards peace — the only worthwhile objective — the Government devoted itself to destroying what had been done, even if the steps previously taken were limited.

Instead of being able to work towards a genuine peace, we have had to endure propaganda manoeuvres aimed at numbing and misleading public opinion, along with meetings that were designed just to give the impression that a dialogue was continuing. Instead of trying to find a solution to the basic conflict, the emphasis shifted to the normalization of relations through economic conferences — as a precondition, even before solving the legal and political problem — instead of having normalization occur naturally as a crowning of the basic solution.

Faced with heightened internal crisis, the Israeli Government resorted to stirring up tension along its borders and in areas under occupation, to divert attention away from the peace it had scuttled. Thus, the principle of provocation and confrontation was re-established in order to create unity internally.

Israel continued to carry out its acts of aggression against southern Lebanon and the western Bekaa, once with the goal of mobilizing Israeli public opinion against peace, and another time for the purpose of emptying international initiatives of their political content.

The attacks continued, through artillery shelling, air raids, operations inside our territories — against villages and cities — against children, women, the elderly and homes. Destruction and demolition continued, as did the

detention of Lebanese citizens in Israeli military camps — all of this without the United Nations international institutions being allowed to visit them. They were not permitted the enjoyment of elementary human rights: the right to counsel and the right to a fair trial. Some of them were returned to us as corpses, while others were tortured or maimed — and this in the era of respect for the rights of environment, of plants, and of animals.

Nonetheless, the more the occupation endured, the more Israel became increasingly bogged down in the quagmire of the south which became an inferno to it. The occupier has become a prisoner, and the aggressor a hostage in the face of a valiant people's steadfastness and the resistance of its sons and daughters. Thus Israel sustained huge losses which is prompting it to rethink the viability and usefulness of its continued occupation of southern Lebanon.

Against this reality, we heard, through misleading media reports, of an Israeli readiness to withdraw.

We have to bring the truth forth. Lebanon's firm stance has always been for a complete Israeli withdrawal to internationally recognized borders so as to enable the Lebanese State to exercise its sovereignty over its territories through its own forces. But Israel does not wish to withdraw; it is still camouflaging its unwillingness to withdraw completely by relocating or redeploying its forces. It continues to cast a smoke screen by asking to maintain inspection and control posts, by imposing conditions that limit the State's authority and by giving the upper hand to the militias that it created. Furthermore, Israel is attempting to impose control over the Lebanese Army, which could be deployed, as well as other conditions that challenge any presumed Lebanese sovereignty when withdrawal takes place.

I should like to pay tribute to our fallen heroes, members of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) — most recently four Italian soldiers and an Irish sergeant. Their blood was spilled in defence of southern Lebanon, mixing with that of Lebanese citizens. I should also like to pay tribute to the Force itself, whose commanders and troops are discharging a difficult task under the most difficult and most trying circumstances.

No sooner had the people of the region begun to adapt to the anticipated climate of peace than they were thrust back into an era of confrontation, violence and inevitable defiance and resistance. Though development plans for the Middle East region were being formulated, and the world

manifested interest in its peaceful future, caution and pessimism began once again to prevail, and hopes were dashed. No sooner had the Government of Israel drawn strength from the veto power used against Security Council resolutions on its settlement policies, it has continued to challenge Council resolutions, thereby undermining whatever is left of the peace process.

The international community, which stands to be affected by the situation in the region, either directly or indirectly, must hold the defiant accountable. The international community has not only the right but also the duty to take action through the Organization of the United Nations. On many occasions, the United Nations has delegated this question to others, hoping that a solution could be found. It has consistently refrained from enforcing its resolutions, in contrast to its recent behaviour vis-à-vis many other States.

The time has come for the United Nations to reclaim its role. The time has come to return to the basics of peace as agreed in Madrid, to the principle of land for peace, to the need to implement Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), and to resume negotiations on all tracks from the point where they stopped. The time has come for Israel immediately to cease all settlement activities; to resolve the status of the city of Jerusalem; to withdraw from the Palestinian territory and recognize the political rights of the Palestinian people; to withdraw from the Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967; to fully withdraw from southern Lebanon and its western Bekaa to the internationally recognized boundaries in order to enable the Lebanese State to exercise its authority, in accordance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

Opting for a peace that ignores these fundamentals is a choice that is doomed to failure, a choice that could ignite the entire region. An isolationist policy that separates the various tracks would run counter to the principle of a comprehensive peace and will never achieve it. This is because the conflict is fundamentally a comprehensive one. It has never been a conflict between one single Arab State and Israel, but has always been between the Arabs and Israel. As long as a single track is excluded from the solution, peace will remain impossible. The tracks are all intertwined, which shows how indivisible and interconnected the cause is. Nobody should think that one track can survive, even for one hour, while other tracks remain excluded.

Because Lebanon is at the heart of the conflict, it has suffered a great deal. Today, however, it is confounding all forecasts and expectations that presaged its demise by proving to the world once again, as it has done throughout its long and time-honoured history, that it is too strong to wither away, and that a right that is claimed by its people will never disappear.

When southern Lebanon and western Bekaa are liberated, when Lebanese sovereignty extends to all its territory, when the United Nations credibility is confirmed by the authority of its resolutions, when Israeli jails are emptied of their innocent detainees and resistance fighters, when an end is put to bloodshed which soaks our land, then and only then will the wound be healed. The tears will then stop and confidence will be restored to all in a genuine, just, permanent and comprehensive peace, a peace that can restore to the land of civilizations, religions and cultures the place it deserves now and in future, as it has always been throughout its long history.

The choice of peace will not always be available to us. The peace that the Assembly supported is in the throes of death today. If restoring peace seems difficult, its demise would close the door to any attempt to rekindle the process in the foreseeable future, thus putting world peace in jeopardy and sparking an uncontrollable conflagration, which will be difficult to contain.

May God guide the steps of those who are working for a peace that is just and not unfair, equitable and not biased, consensual and not imposed, a peace that honours the memory of those martyred, that does justice to those who struggle, and that would put an end to darkness in the land of the prophets and the messengers of God.

The Acting President: I call on the Chairman of the delegation of Kuwait, Mr. Mohammad Abulhasan.

Mr. Abulhasan (Kuwait) (interpretation from Arabic): It gives me pleasure to convey to the President the greetings of His Excellency Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Acting Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait, who profoundly regrets being unable to participate personally in the debate at this session due to some pressing matters. He has requested me to deliver the following statement by Kuwait on his behalf:

"On behalf of the State of Kuwait, it gives me pleasure to congratulate Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko on his election as President of the United Nations

General Assembly at its fifty-second session. We are confident that he will be able to lead our deliberations efficiently towards a successful conclusion. The extensive experience he has gained from service at this important international institution together with the high posts he has assumed will no doubt prove valuable. Let me also underline the good relations existing between our two countries, based on mutual understanding and common interest.

"I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to his predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, the former President of the General Assembly, who demonstrated an impressive sense of purpose, dedication and deep perception. Under his stewardship, the Assembly reasserted its genuine importance and relevance in international relations.

"I wish to pay tribute to our new Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, who took the helm of the Organization at the beginning of the year. Apart from being a long-time career insider at the United Nations, Mr. Annan to us now stands as a good example of the executive manager enjoying wisdom and prudence, together with integrity and commitment, that make him a living embodiment of dedication to the ideals and mission of the United Nations.

"In the same vein, I wish to set on record our recognition of the significant contribution of Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the former Secretary-General, in leading the Organization with efficiency and confidence. Kuwait will always recognize his contributions with a deep sense of appreciation.

"Two years ago, the United Nations celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. The mood then was optimistic about the role and capability of the Organization to cope with the lingering issues that remained without a solution over the first half century. This was due to the nature of these problems, which was aggravated by the major-Power polarization during the cold war. The sense of optimism emanated from our deep conviction that the global understanding that swept the world would eventually generate the firm will to address the outstanding problems that jeopardize international peace and security. Also, the widespread public awareness of the relevance of the United Nations would also help the Organization in resolving

pending matters. Furthermore, the impressive track record of the United Nations has earned it collective credibility regarding the vitality and flexibility of the machinery at its disposal.

"Kuwait has examined with great interest the measures and recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, entitled 'Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform', which was submitted to the General Assembly in mid-July last. In this connection, we would like to register Kuwait's support for this programme and its appreciation of the efforts made by Mr. Kofi Annan and his assistants to produce this impressive achievement. The report is analytical in its approach and pragmatic in its outlook, focusing on performance efficiency without partiality. It also focused on improving the financial situation of the Organization through the institution of better internal control mechanisms and practical suggestions. The ultimate goal of all these measures is to enhance the performance of the United Nations, which would be more innovative in its operational modalities and more focused on its global concerns.

"We have noted, with appreciation, the reports submitted by a wide array of working groups on restructuring the organs of the United Nations and improving their efficiency in order to adapt the entire system to the new era following the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and the post-confrontation environment. The United Nations seems poised to embark on addressing in a more comprehensive manner humanitarian, cultural, demographic and environmental issues which were not prominent on its list of priorities previously.

"Moreover, as we recognize the realities of contemporary life, we understand that the world order continues to be quite fluid, and it is indeed difficult to predict its future shape. The current stage is not a unipolar power era, as some might imagine. It is a multipolar arena, where military might is no longer the final arbiter in the definition of polarity. In fact, there exists immense technological superiority, which may enable some States to make an outstanding contribution to the shaping of global strategies. There is also the economic power that has brought together the major industrial nations in a collectivity which has a significant influence on the implementation of world strategies. This is not to mention the giant economic groupings which exist in the world of today.

"Accordingly, the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council, and other Matters Related to the Security Council, which has been examining the question of reform and expansion of Security Council membership for the past four years, should take these new facts of life into consideration. Once agreed upon, the new membership composition should reflect a collective and emphatic will to address adequately the issues at hand. Permanent members of the Council should be politically capable and should be financial and troop contributors. They should also be adept at crisis management, and able to act decisively, without hesitation, when the situation warrants such action.

"In the final analysis, membership of the Security Council is not a privilege as much as it is a responsibility. It should not be a means for visibility, but a product of conviction. Our view is that the Security Council in its forthcoming composition should be a mirror reflecting a world shifting towards universalization and transparency in order to instil a better sense of security in all members of the world community, both North and South, East and West. Membership should not be divided between diverse security concepts, some favouring the North, while others are appropriate for the South.

"In this context, Kuwait affirms its full commitment to the common Arab position and to the stand of the Non-Aligned Movement, both of which were elaborated time and again in several meetings of the Open-ended Working Group.

"Undoubtedly, agreement on the concept of unconventional and common security requires in the first instance recognition of some crucial facts. The first element is the conviction that the security of humankind is universal and, in the final analysis, indivisible. The interests of members of the world community have become more and more interdependent, while civilizations and cultures are drawing closer. The daily concerns of individuals are universal in nature, requiring complex solutions, and are multidimensional in their negative impacts. The second element is the emphasis on the concept of economic and social development as a crucial factor in ensuring conventional security and collective handling of development requirements.

This also calls for the involvement of international institutions in contributions to the improvement of living conditions in the poor nations that face severe impediments in their development efforts.

"The third element is a firm belief in and commitment to the dignity of the human person as being the essence of human relations both within a given society and among nations. In effect, this means upholding the dignity of the human person in the face of bloody regimes which flagrantly violate the principles of human rights and destroy their own nations to arrogate power to themselves. This brings us to the necessity of safeguarding the principles set forth in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the Charter of the United Nations.

"Fourthly, all members of the world community should adopt peaceful policies which renounce violence, recognize the legitimate interests of others and respect their rights, expand the zones of mutual interests, give due priority to development and reject the arms race. Such peaceful policies should also abstain from behaviour and political expressions which disturb peace. They should observe civilized conduct in relationships among peoples, without the pursuit of any party's privileges at the expense of others. No one should claim an imaginary historical role outside the parameters of justice, equality and the rule of law.

"The world today is indeed a small planet whose problems interact and overlap. Its pressing problems are a global responsibility. When viewed through a human and global prism, we can see that the prosperity of the North pales in the shadow of the poverty of the South. The security of Europe will not be assured against a background of a marginalized Africa. There will be little peace of mind in America in the face of a population explosion in Asia, and with the widening gap between those with an abundance of wealth and those who suffer in deprivation. Dealing with the new developments in the world environment requires the evolution of a comprehensive concept of security. Any such concept must be anchored in understanding, coexistence, common interests, and the utilization of the universal technological revolution in managing vital national projects. This concept should replace the outdated concepts of security based on the balance of power, mutual deterrence and military presence.

The President took the Chair.

"The achievements made by the United Nations should provide the Organization with a further impetus to pursue the same course it has charted since the end of the cold war.

"We welcome the movement towards the prohibition of the production, stockpiling and use of landmines. This would be yet another positive step added to similar measures, such as the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Despite such instruments, some States continue to export weapons of mass destruction as a vital source of increased national income. We welcome the regulations that have been concluded to control arms, to reduce the level of nuclear threat, to tighten controls over the arms trade and to increase transparency regarding weapons expenditures.

"In the same vein, we cannot underestimate the achievements made in the area of peacekeeping operations, where the United Nations has managed to contain dangers and defuse crises in several instances, although many regional problems remain unresolved and constitute flash-points of tension.

"In this regard, we in Kuwait cannot but recall with admiration the firmness with which the Security Council responded to the aggression by the Iraqi regime against the State of Kuwait in August 1990. The Council's response was characterized by firmness in rejecting aggression, resoluteness in its confrontation, and decisive action to abort the aggression through a series of resolutions that made the Council's position perfectly clear. It started with rejection of aggression, then moved to deterrence, and culminated in decisive action. In all its dimensions and ramifications, that case has become a historical precedent that might constitute the basis for a solid background for dealing with any similar aggression, irrespective of its origin, against any State.

"But Iraq, despite the dire need of its people for the lifting of economic sanctions imposed by the Security Council, has not yet fulfilled basic conditions required for ending the sanctions. There is the question of Kuwaiti and third-country prisoners and detainees. This is a humanitarian issue

that affects several hundred families who still do not know the whereabouts of their loved ones. Young children continue to cry, appealing for help to rescue their missing fathers. The ad hoc Tripartite Commission continues to meet in Geneva while its technical sub-group still convenes in the border area between Kuwait and Iraq. Despite the formal nature of such regular meetings, which attract media attention, there has in effect been no progress in determining the fate of these missing persons. In fact, the Iraqi regime has been exploiting their fate as a bargaining chip in its diplomatic manoeuvres. Iraq also continues to refuse to return a great deal of Kuwaiti property taken from the public and private sectors, the most important of which is an air defence system and other military equipment, in addition to the principal State documents, which have been referred to in the Security Council as State memory.

"Among the other key obligations the Iraqi regime has failed to fulfil is the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, a subject that is being handled by the Special Commission. In this context, even after seven years of formal acceptance of relevant conditions, Iraq continues to indulge its hobby of procrastination, subterfuge and deception. Iraq hides certain weapons only to acknowledge later their existence after the Special Commission secures definitive proof of Iraq's ownership of such weapons. It denies having certain types of missiles and biological components only to recant its assertions once the international teams of inspectors discover those items.

"Kuwait welcomes Security Council resolution 1111 (1997) regarding the extension of the implementation of the provisions of resolution 986 (1995), which aims at alleviating the suffering of the brotherly people of Iraq. Indeed, the hardship faced by the people of Iraq has long persisted, due to the failure of the Iraqi regime to meet its obligations, and to its pursuit of a policy of procrastination and trickery. Iraq is called upon to follow a peaceful policy with neighbouring States in order to prove its good intentions. This is a substantive condition for the maintenance of regional security, which was shattered by the Iraqi regime.

"We in Kuwait have gone through bitter experiences with regard to the intentions of the Iraqi regime, which seeks territorial expansion, regional supremacy, and military superiority at the expense of

neighbouring countries and of their peace and stability.

"In the light of our eager interest in the maintenance of security and stability in the region, we affirm the need to preserve the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq.

"The supreme goal is to build a solid regional system firmly rooted in common understanding among neighbouring States which seek to expand avenues of mutual interests. This can be achieved through respect for and non-interference in the internal affairs of others, and through civilized coexistence among neighbouring peoples. In this respect, I should point out that my country is concerned over the continued existence of the problem of the occupation by Iran of three United Arab Emirates islands. Here I wish to emphasize Kuwait's full commitment to the decision taken by the Gulf Cooperation Council on this subject.

"I wish also to call upon the Islamic Republic of Iran to respond favourably to the peaceful initiative launched by His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, President of our sister United Arab Emirates, to engage in a serious dialogue that would take into account the inalienable rights of the United Arab Emirates to the islands in question, in accordance with the principles of good neighbourly relations, international law and the United Nations Charter.

"The question of the Middle East and the success of the peace process there are crucial matters for world peace and security. You follow with us with deep regret the paralysis which befell that process and the increasing frustration and tension throughout the region. The current stalemate has touched off a flurry of threats and recriminations. All this is the net sum of the concepts put out by the Israeli Government regarding the frame of reference underlying the peace process in the region.

"The Government of Israel has backtracked from the rules and principles of the Madrid Peace Conference and has replaced them by extraneous elements which contravene the rules unanimously agreed upon by the international community as a framework for the peace process, namely Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973),

together with the "land for peace" principle. Furthermore, Israel has not committed itself to implement bilateral agreements reached with the Palestinian Authority, including withdrawal from all occupied territories, including Jerusalem. Also, Israel has not desisted from its policies of annexing Arab Jerusalem, its Judaization and expansion of its illegal settlement in order to change the demographic composition of the Holy City which lies at the very core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this regard, we call upon the co-sponsors of the peace initiative to maintain even-handedness while doubling their efforts to revive the peace process in order to achieve a lasting, comprehensive and just resolution of the question of Palestine.

"The people of Palestine have suffered for too long the excruciating pain of oppression, homelessness and neglect. It is the inherent right of the Palestinian people to exercise self-determination and to establish their own independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital, similar to other peoples who gained independence, so that they may contribute, within their own capacity, towards building world peace.

"Along similar lines, Kuwait emphasizes the importance of Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan, which has been under occupation since 1967. This question cannot be ignored if we desire the peace process to be complete. Indeed, the peace must be comprehensive, covering all tracks. It should be anchored in good faith, in respect for the rights of others and in mutual confidence. In this regard, we support Syria's position that negotiations with Israel should resume from the point where they halted instead of starting new rounds of talks whose terms of reference have not been defined. Kuwait also supports Lebanon's firm stand that Israel is duty-bound to implement all provisions of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) and to preserve Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity. This can be achieved only by full, unconditional Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon, so that Lebanon could resume its traditional role in consolidating development and prosperity.

"Kuwait notes with deep regret that ethnic, factional and civil conflicts among tribal chiefs in both Afghanistan and Somalia still continue. We remain hopeful that the United Nations will take more effective steps to address these problems that have

torn asunder those two countries and have continued to undermine regional security. We also appeal to all parties in these two countries to put an end to acts of violence and to put overall national interests ahead of their tribal and ethnic interests.

"Kuwait lauds international efforts to implement fully the Dayton Agreement, which aims at achieving security and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina and upholding international legitimacy at this stage. In this respect, we applaud the Security Council resolution to indict and prosecute certain political and military leaders in Bosnia and Rwanda for their crimes against humanity.

"We live in a world bursting with events. Distances have shrunk, interests have grown, and security dimensions have become more interlinked. Adverse developments in the South worry the population of the North. Failure of development efforts has given impetus to chaotic waves of hungry migrants. Threats resulting from peoples' frustrations have become interwoven. But, in our common pursuit of a better tomorrow, we must act on the basis of a universal conviction that armaments by themselves do not guarantee full security, that development is the core of progress, that dialogue is the bridge to understanding and that serious work gives birth to hope. Giving is an obligation, not an act of charity. Respect among nations is a key to stability, and self-improvement is a motive for work. Participation is the path to cooperation. Monopoly is one of the evils of bygone days, and openness is the road to a better future. Investments are the tools of development. Bigotry is repugnant to contemporary international relations. People prosper in a civilized environment that imbues them with the virtues of doing good and giving, reaching out towards those in need and moving against the odds in efforts to create a world that exudes friendship and amity, a world resting on the rules of international legality, a world enjoying security, peace and prosperity.

"Our last prayer is to bless Allah, the lord of the universe."

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ablassé Ouedraogo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso.

Mr. Ouedraogo (Burkina Faso) (*interpretation from French*): Sir, your rich experience in the United Nations system, your country — Ukraine — your current responsibilities and your personality assure us of the competence and dedication with which you will fulfil your mission as President of the fifty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly.

We would like to extend our most sincere congratulations and our gratitude to your predecessor, Ambassador Ismail Razali of Malaysia, for a full, hard-working and stimulating fifty-first session. We reiterate our encouragement and support to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. We also wish to commend the work which he and his team have accomplished in only nine months.

Last Thursday, 25 September, the Security Council issued a statement on the situation in Africa, in which it said:

"The Security Council reaffirms the responsibility of all Member States to settle their international disputes by peaceful means and its own primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations." (S/PRST/1997/46)

Burkina Faso shares this vision. Together with other African countries, it has become involved in subregional and regional initiatives with regard to our brother countries of Liberia, the Central African Republic and Burundi, to name only a few. Burkina Faso, whose confidence has been strengthened by that experience, reaffirms the inestimable value of preventive diplomacy. We therefore support any action designed to achieve that end, and call upon the United Nations to develop a genuine conflict-prevention policy. From north to south and from west to east, African States have been taking action on a continuous basis and in a variety of ways to deal with armed conflicts, political instability and internal disorder in our continent.

Africa is daily demonstrating its clear determination to solve its own problems as a matter of priority by creating, among other things, a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. Having made the maximum regional contribution, therefore, to the resolution of these problems, it wonders why the Security Council seems not to be responding. Where does the Security Council's chief responsibility lie? The worst thing that could happen to the Organization would be for Member

States to begin to believe that our common institution has two different yardsticks. Our statements and appeals would then no longer be of any value, and our possible actions would be affected, and weakened.

The purposes enshrined in the United Nations Charter — peace and security and economic and social development — can only be attained, consolidated and maintained by means of justice within nations, justice among nations and, therefore, justice throughout the world. The task is enormous. The justice demanded would not imply the end of the influence of power, but it would indicate whether such influence was positive or negative.

With regard to disarmament, we must reaffirm the necessity of working towards the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, whether nuclear, chemical or biological.

In Africa, the illicit traffic in small arms has had new and increasingly uncontrollable consequences, ranging from an increase in armed criminal acts to the proliferation of armed refugees. This provokes and adds to the instability of entire regions. My delegation would like to know what has become of the follow-up to the Secretary-General's initiative under resolution 51/45 L on assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them.

Burkina Faso welcomes the results of the Oslo conference on anti-personnel landmines, and urges all States to adhere as quickly as possible to the Convention adopted in Oslo, and above all to comply with its terms.

Burkina Faso remains concerned by all situations of turmoil, instability and conflict, from Afghanistan and the former Yugoslavia to Cambodia.

The illusions harboured after the end of the cold war are now giving way to a contrasting vision in which the factors of integration and disintegration in our world are becoming clearer. In Africa, the tragedy in Somalia has been followed by tragedies in the Great Lakes region and the Republic of Congo, while the Democratic Republic of the Congo is now embarking, with some hesitation, upon the road towards restoration. In Liberia, elections finally allowing that country to recover, too, and to contemplate the colossal task of national reconstruction are taking place. However, in the neighbouring country of Sierra Leone constitutional order has been violated and flouted.

Burkina Faso reaffirms its resolute condemnation of the interruption of the democratic process in Sierra Leone as well as its adherence to decision 356, on the situation in Sierra Leone, taken by the Heads of State or Government of the Organization of African Unity at its thirty-third summit meeting in Harare.

We welcome the significant advances made in Angola and urge all the parties, especially UNITA, to play a constructive role.

In the Middle East, Burkina Faso is concerned about the repeated setbacks to the peace process and calls on the parties to ensure that acts of provocation do not create a deadly chain of violence that would go against the interests of the peoples of the region.

The international environment is undergoing a process of constant change under the combined effect of three phenomena: globalization of the economy and of threats; liberalization of markets; and the information and communications revolution. While we welcome the creation and consolidation of large economic and monetary groupings throughout the world, the upheavals created by globalization and the demands of a triumphant free-market model illustrate the fragile nature of the successes achieved, and show more clearly that moderation and justice are the basic requirements.

Africa, like a patient being cared for on his sick-bed, has heard and heeded the diagnosis and the suggested remedies, including programmes, projects, agendas and special initiatives. This continent, which is engaged in a constant struggle, is achieving some results that run the risk of being wiped out by globalization, in that its international trade is continuing to decrease as a result mainly of outside factors, further increasing its marginalization.

Developing countries expect the Agenda for Development, adopted during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, to be a catalyst for a new global partnership for development. The sincerity of the commitment of each and every one of us will be judged according to the effectiveness of its implementation. In this regard, and on all economic and environmental issues, we support the comments made on behalf of us all by Tanzania, which holds the presidency of the Group of 77.

Burkina Faso, together with other Member States, has asked for consideration of the need to review resolution 2758 (XXVI), which excludes from the United Nations the

Republic of China on Taiwan. In doing so, Burkina Faso has no intention of violating the rights of another Member State. It merely asks that, given the new context, the reality of the Republic of China be acknowledged. This reality is demonstrated by the many and various relations that the Republic of China has in one form or another with most States. A review would do justice to the 21.5 million inhabitants while work goes on to resolve the matter by the reunification desired by both sides.

While we continue to call for respect for human rights and respect for freedoms, there is still concern that it has not yet been possible to implement a position that the General Assembly has affirmed and reaffirmed, year after year. The principle of freedom of trade is overtly being violated, and Cuba, a Member State, is the victim. Burkina Faso believes that the international community must continue its efforts to convince all the parties concerned that since the embargo and obstacles to free trade have not yet resolved the dispute, new constructive paths must be explored.

Similarly, along with the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), Burkina Faso affirms the need to find a solution to the dispute between Libya, the United States and the United Kingdom with regard to the Lockerbie tragedy. As well as the sufferings of the families of those who perished, many other people are continuing to suffer from the sanctions imposed against Libya. The Organization of African Unity has always expressed its concern at the unremitting sanctions imposed on Libya and their humanitarian consequences for its people, and has advocated a fair trial of the suspects pursuant to accepted principles of justice and international law. With the OAU, Burkina Faso hopes that the Security Council will give due attention to the proposal made jointly by the Organization of African Unity and the League of Arab States with a view to finding a just and equitable solution to the crisis.

Speaking of the Security Council, a permanent member of the Council used the formula that it is far better to support a proposal for change backed by a large majority than to support a status quo that enjoys the support of almost no one. Such reform is now a necessity with regard to which Africa has developed a common position. Africa, which was absent in 1945, intends to gain recognition for its right to a place in the Security Council, in which most of the matters dealt with are African. Two permanent seats and some non-permanent seats would represent the beginning of justice for a

continent which, along with Latin America, has no permanent representation. Burkina Faso believes that the enlargement of the Security Council, while including Japan and Germany, must necessarily provide equitable representation for Africa, Asia and Latin America.

In addition to the Council's composition, its functioning must also be reviewed. The future Security Council must no longer be a body that behaves all too often like a club for the privileged; rather, it must behave like an institution imbued with the highest responsibilities and aspirations for the benefit of all, without discrimination. Without that understanding, reform will be futile.

At the fifty-first session, I concluded by saying:

"We are now seeing that the State is surrendering control over certain elements of its sovereignty. Everywhere, structures and organizations with varying degrees of legality are transcending States and establishing transnational networks and relations. It is therefore imperative that we keep pace with these trends and adapt now and in the future our special instrument, our common instrument: the United Nations at the service of peoples. Political will is what will make the difference." [*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings, 20th meeting, p. 24*]

Earlier today, speaking of the globalization of the economy, I also mentioned the globalization of threats. I had in mind poverty, environmental deterioration, terrorism, drug trafficking, pandemics and, in general, the great disasters caused by man or by nature.

The United Nations is in this regard an irreplaceable and invaluable tool. We thank and most warmly commend our brother Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, who, in the space of nine months, has produced proposals designed to keep us all in step with the times and future challenges. In our quest for peace, security, progress, prosperity and justice, the Secretary-General is proposing that we define and redefine the instrument of our solidarity and our common condition. Burkina Faso will join wholeheartedly in this exercise and will support any movement that can lead us to development, which is one of the cardinal points of our quest and a platform on which all of the United Nations essential missions can come together: the maintenance of international peace and security, the promotion of justice and international law, the strengthening of cooperation for development, the protection of human rights and humanitarian assistance.

While we welcome and applaud the generous contribution a wealthy individual has made to the United Nations, we must also remind all States that their contributions are a fulfilment of solemn and voluntary commitments. Contributions to the budget must be made in full, on time and without conditions. This is also part of the needed reform.

The developments we are witnessing are profoundly contradictory. The future is marked by pairs of opposites — integration and disintegration; stability and instability; wealth and poverty; health and incurable disease; the opening and closing of borders; democracies and dictatorships; *inter alia*. They, it is said, are the very stuff of life.

The pendulum swings from optimism to pessimism and then back again. To stop it as it swings towards optimism, we will need, as never before, to see to it that the international community can find and cultivate the virtues of inclusion and justice, for otherwise we will see develop before our eyes, to an increasing degree, a world of cruel and pitiless violence.

The United Nations is our chance for a world of hope, justice, peace and progress. Let us seize this chance.

The President: I now call on His Excellency the Honourable Kamal Thapa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal.

Mr. Thapa (Nepal): First of all, on behalf of the Government and people of Nepal and on my own behalf, I should like to extend to you, Sir, our warmest congratulations on your election as President of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. I am confident that with your rich experience in international affairs you will guide the work of the Assembly to a successful conclusion. I wish also to assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation in the discharge of your responsibilities.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer our deep appreciation and thanks to the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, Ambassador Razali Ismail of the friendly country of Malaysia, for the enthusiasm, dedication and zeal he brought to bear on the work of the previous session.

To Secretary-General Kofi Annan, I bring greetings and best wishes from Nepal. In every way, he is proving

himself worthy of the great trust the membership has placed in him. Having shown his deep commitment to United Nations reform from the day of his appointment as Secretary-General, he has presented us with a set of very serious and far-reaching proposals of impressive breadth and scope, with a view to reshaping the United Nations so that it can better serve humanity in the years ahead.

The Secretary-General has asked us to make this session of the General Assembly one of reform. We agree with him that United Nations reform is the shared concern of all Member States and that the purpose of the reform is to strengthen the role of the United Nations and enhance its efficiency. In the aftermath of the end of the cold war, the world situation is continuously undergoing profound changes, evolving progressively towards a world of multipolarity which reinforces the core of the United Nations Charter: peace and development in large freedom.

The universal cause, therefore, is to make the United Nations a more vibrant world Organization that is more properly equipped, institutionally and financially, to meet the evolving challenges of the next century.

The proposals of the Secretary-General complement the ongoing intergovernmental process regarding the revitalization of the United Nations, particularly financial reform and reform of the Security Council.

The United Nations, if it is to perform the mission set out in its Charter, cannot limp from one year to another on the verge of bankruptcy. No country should bear an excessive burden, but the fundamental principle of any scale of assessments should be the capacity to pay, calculated on the basis of the country's share of global gross national product. It also does not make sense that half the total membership is assessed the same amount in contributions. A change in the scale of assessments is overdue. Countries, rich and poor, must pay their assessed share in full, on time and without conditions.

With regard to the reform of the Security Council, the organ which bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, Nepal's position coincides basically with the position taken by the Non-Aligned Movement, as reflected, in particular, in the Cartagena summit Declaration and the subsequent Declarations of the meetings of Foreign Ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement. The Security Council should better reflect changes in contemporary political and economic realities. It should be more representative in composition and more transparent in its functioning. It

must be more democratic in character. It must be more reflective of balance between the North and South. It must, above all, be capable of prompt action when peace is threatened. The contribution of Member States to international peace and security should be the guiding criterion for the selection of Members of the expanded Security Council in both permanent and non-permanent categories. Since the Security Council is the principal instrument of the international community in the area of collective security, I must emphasize here that any reform must be the fruit of ratifiable global consensus and must in no way diminish the Council's capacity for prompt and effective action to maintain international peace and security.

In the view of my delegation, the reform proposals of the Secretary-General, which deserve our appreciation and support, are categorized in three broad areas: management of conflicts and peacekeeping; strengthening and integration at headquarters, and field levels of United Nations development activities; and protection and promotion of human rights.

Too often in the past, the United Nations has suffered from a sore need for a capacity to act in the face of conflicts. The Secretary-General must be encouraged and supported financially to make use of his high office for the resolution of emerging conflicts. When peacekeeping operations are mandated by the Security Council, the capacity of the Secretary-General to organize and mount them in time should be strengthened. Peacekeeping, to be effective, is dependent largely on the maintenance of elements within the national armed forces of Member States that can be made available promptly to the United Nations. Sixty-six countries are now participating in United Nations standby arrangements, and I am happy to say that Nepal is one of the 10 countries to sign the Memorandum of Understanding which commits my country to contribute 2,000 troops, including doctors, engineers, observers and headquarters staff and 200 civilian monitors for peacekeeping purposes, at short notice. It is high time that the rapidly deployable mission headquarters became operational.

Nepal is confident that the Secretary-General's proposals for a new United Nations Development Group and a United Nations Development Assistance Framework will provide clearer focus and direction to United Nations development activities aimed at sustainable development and the eradication of poverty. In Nepal, many of the development activities carried out by the United Nations are already practically integrated

at the field level. Care has to be taken, however, that in the name of integration or merger, the demonstrated strength of individual programmes, funds or agencies is not lost. We also find the proposal for a Special Commission to look at the division of labour among the various specialized agencies across the United Nations system very interesting and deserving of careful consideration. With a view to achieving greater harmonization of international development efforts, Nepal feels the need for a closer relationship between the United Nations and international financial institutions and the World Trade Organization.

Since peace, progress and humanity are the core concern of the United Nations, Nepal, as a functioning democracy with a deep commitment to human rights, appreciates the intention of the Secretary-General to strengthen and broaden the capacity of the United Nations in the field of human rights. We welcome the strengthening of the Human Rights secretariat and the choice of Mrs. Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland, as High Commissioner for Human Rights. There could hardly be a better choice. I wish to congratulate the new High Commissioner and express the confidence of my delegation that she will be an independent and credible defender of human rights. We welcome her determination to narrow the gap in the perception of human rights. She has rightly observed that collective and individual rights are not mutually exclusive and that the scope of human rights is interlinked with social, cultural and economic issues requiring a broad approach.

As a signatory of all basic international human rights instruments and a participant in the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, Nepal looks forward to the fiftieth anniversary next year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Together with freedom of speech and belief, the Declaration characterizes freedom from fear and freedom from want as the highest aspirations of human beings. Along with concerns for peace and sustainable development, it is right that concerns for human rights should also be made an integral part of the work of the United Nations.

Peace in many parts of the world continues to remain fragile. Nepal is deeply concerned over the setbacks in the peace process in the Middle East. The settlements policy has retarded the process. Nor has the spate of violence in the region helped restore the mutual confidence without which no peace process can succeed.

Without a resolution to the Palestinian problem, no comprehensive, just and lasting peace will be possible in

the Middle East. We urge the concerned parties not to deviate from their professed commitment to resolving the problem through peaceful means.

The extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty represent a fine moment in the history of nuclear-arms control and disarmament. The Convention on Chemical Weapons has come into force, to our great satisfaction. With the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in South-East Asia and Africa last year, we hope that efforts to create such zones in other regions, such as the Middle East and South Asia, will be relentlessly pursued.

Disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, means nothing if it does not provide security to nations and peoples. Only a complete elimination of nuclear weapons will provide such security. It is in this spirit that we have supported the programme of action advanced by 28 NAM and neutral countries, members of the Conference on Disarmament, for the elimination of nuclear weapons through phases over a period of time. We are disappointed by the complete lack of progress in this year's session of the Conference on Disarmament.

Nepal is in favour of strengthening the role of the Conference on Disarmament as the principal global disarmament negotiating forum.

Nepal welcomes the agreement in Oslo this month on the text of a convention for the total ban on anti-personnel landmines and will seriously consider signing the convention in Ottawa in December. Landmines should not be allowed to be used indiscriminately and to maim and take innocent lives, including those of women and children.

While the importance of the issues of weapons of mass destruction cannot be overemphasized, it is to be noted that it is conventional weapons that have killed the most people throughout history. Therein lies the importance of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. The work of the United Nations Panel of Experts on Small Arms, one of whose sessions was hosted in Kathmandu this year, has laid the foundation for future United Nations action in this area.

Confidence-building measures and regular dialogues in informal settings represent an indispensable element in the long and arduous efforts undertaken on behalf of disarmament and security. I am pleased to note that the

United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, located in Kathmandu, has been found to be a useful forum for such informal dialogues on disarmament and security issues.

Nepal's consistent participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations reflects our abiding faith in the ideals of the United Nations. Over the past four decades, Nepal's peacekeepers have served with pride in all regions of the world under the United Nations for the cause of peace. Many of the Nepalese Blue Helmets have lost their lives and limbs in the pursuit of peace. Nepalese soldiers have served the United Nations with dedication and professionalism. Nepal will continue to serve the cause of peace by responding positively and promptly to every call for assistance from the United Nations.

The adoption of An Agenda for Development this year, following protracted and tortuous negotiations over a period of three years, is a welcome sign for the renewal of development cooperation between the North and South. The Agenda identifies groups of countries in special need: least developed countries, Africa, landlocked developing countries, small island developing countries and countries with transitional economies. The usefulness of the Agenda will be measured only in terms of its faithful implementation. The provision of additional resources on an assured and predictable basis is a prerequisite to the sustainable development of the least developed and landlocked countries.

The decision of the General Assembly last year establishing the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty represents the long-awaited recognition by the international community of the pervasive nature of poverty, which today is the greatest threat to peace, sustainable development and human rights. The eradication of poverty, therefore, should be a core activity of the United Nations. We recognize that this is the principal thrust of the reform measures and proposals of the Secretary-General. I wish once again to pledge my country's full support and cooperation to the Secretary-General in this regard. Poverty alleviation is the priority area of sustainable development planning in Nepal. A massive programme is needed to reduce poverty in a meaningful way.

The rapid decline of living standards today in almost all the least developed countries and developing landlocked countries is an ironic testimony to the gross marginalization of those countries, despite the new trade regime that is supposed to usher in an era of prosperity throughout the

world. This anomaly is further compounded by the accelerating reduction of official development assistance to the least developed countries. For the least developed countries, and the landlocked among them, which suffer from additional physical handicaps, foreign direct investment cannot be a substitute for official development assistance for some time to come.

I would like to affirm Nepal's unreserved condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and our determination to prevent terrorists from deriving benefit from their acts. It is our firm position that terrorism is a threat to both internal and international security and to peaceful relations between States. It is, moreover, a threat to the growth and functioning of democratic institutions and to the enjoyment of human rights all over the world. Nepal will never allow its territory to be used by terrorists against other countries.

Nepal holds the view that States should create an environment in which people do not have to be displaced or flee their countries as refugees. The number of such people is in millions and, in the words of the Secretary-General, unquantifiable. Nepal is also bearing the burden of refugees. Nepal being a least developed and landlocked country struggling to cope with the rising aspirations of its people in a parliamentary set-up with deep human-rights commitments, the burden is painful for us. We have received international humanitarian assistance, for which we are grateful. The magnitude of the problem for us can be judged by the fact that one in every 200 people in Nepal today is a refugee. We uphold the right of the refugees to return to their home in peace and honour. His Majesty's Government of Nepal is determined to solve the problem peacefully by dialogue.

Nepal is a founding member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Nepal is actively pursuing a policy of promoting regional cooperation and understanding under the umbrella of SAARC, an Association which forms a critical part of our broad policy of peace, friendship and cooperation with all countries of the world in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations and non-alignment.

The seven countries of the region are engaged in various areas of cooperation, including the suppression of terrorism and drug abuse, environmental preservation, poverty alleviation and the promotion of regional trade. We are endeavouring to harmonize the policies of the seven member countries on important global issues. We did so during the nineteenth special session of the

General Assembly devoted to environment and sustainable development. Many ministerial meetings in the region are now annual events. Foreign Ministers of the region will be meeting in New York in an informal setting during the annual session of the General Assembly. SAARC has lagged behind other similar associations, but the countries of the region are persevering in their efforts to develop both the habit and concrete measures of cooperation.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

A number of delegations have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I remind members that, in accordance with decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply shall be limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Choe Myong Nam (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): We have been surprised by the fact that the gentleman from South Korea this morning attempted to infuse antagonism and confrontation with distorted allegations against us at the time when prominent personalities of the world are engaging in constructive deliberations on the enhancement of the United Nations role in the twenty-first century in an atmosphere of reconciliation and cooperation. We strongly reject his allegations, which are characterized by falseness and political illiteracy aimed at misleading world opinion.

As for chemical weapons, it was none other than the United States and South Korea that introduced and used chemical weapons in the Korean peninsula. Therefore, the South Korean authorities have no right whatsoever to talk about the Chemical Weapons Convention. My country was a direct victim of biochemical-weapon attacks by the United States and South Korea during the Korean War in the 1950s. The fact that South Korea, which is the offender, is slandering my country while maintaining a huge storage of chemical weapons is nothing but a deceptive plot to keep behind a screen its preparations for new biochemical-weapons warfare. It remains exclusively the sovereign right of each State whether or not to accede to the Convention on the ban of chemical weapons.

South Korea's imitation of exactly what was said by the United States — which is the suzerain State of South Korea — in regard to anti-personnel landmines is arousing great disappointment on the part of the international community.

As for the issue of human rights, South Korea is actually a human rights desert on the Korean peninsula which causes grave concern to the international community. The present social system in South Korea inevitably leads to a systematic and consistent pattern of gross violations of human rights. This is because the national security law, which completely denies all rights and freedoms — including the right to chose ideology and freedom of expression and opinion, which are stipulated in international human rights instruments — has been in existence as a legal apparatus to prop up such a social system for the past half century.

The national security law has so far produced a large number of prisoners of conscience, including long-term political prisoners, and is still being used as a panacea to suppress the non-violent political activities of dissidents and organizations, including "Manchongryon", the South Korean student organization.

According to initial statistics there are hundreds of prisoners of conscience, including long-term political prisoners such as Messrs. An Hak Sop and Han Jang Ho and many others who have been imprisoned for more than 40 years, twice as long as the term served by President Nelson Mandela of South Africa, who was once known in the world as the longest-serving prisoner. They have been languishing in prison cells 0.7 square metres in size, without seeing a single ray of the sun from the age of 20 years up to 60 or 70 years. Only after their deaths can they be released.

Whether thousands or tens of thousands more such prisoners of conscience are yet to be known remains the only secret of the South Korean authorities. As long as such anti-human rights laws as the national security law linger like a nightmare, the situation of human rights violations in South Korea will remain unchanged. The international community has already stigmatized the national security law as a root cause of the human rights violations and called for its abolition accordingly.

Even the United States, suzerain State of South Korea, could no longer protect South Korea and made it clear that the abolition of the national security law was its official position. It is imperative that the South Korean authorities keep in mind that their regime cannot automatically become a civilian regime simply by being decorated with a civilian wrapper.

We take this opportunity to recommend to South Korea that it discontinue becoming the object of

international denunciation by abolishing the national security law, democratizing its society and unconditionally releasing all prisoners of conscience.

We have much more to say to South Korea with regard to the four-party talks. The United States and South Korean sides explained that the proposed four-party talks are intended to ensure durable peace on the Korean peninsula. In order to achieve this peace, the present armistice system should be replaced without delay with a durable peace agreement and the United States troops stationed in South Korea should be withdrawn. This is the common sense which is crystal clear to everyone.

However, during the previous two rounds of preliminary talks, the South Korean side strongly opposed the deliberations of these issues, contrary to the aforementioned purposes of the talks. Instead it insisted that the four-party talks should focus mainly on the issue concerning the relations between the North and the South of Korea. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea maintains its stance that it is undesirable to discuss the issue of North-South relations at the multilateral talks because this is an internal issue of the nation. Therefore, the claim on the part of the South Korean side for the deliberation of the internal views of the nation at the multilateral talks is an expression devoid of any national independence and an anti-national act to induce foreign interferences.

South Korea cosmeticized itself as if it were an angel in providing humanitarian assistance. This is nothing but sheer hypocrisy. To be frank with you, Sir, South Korea is clamouring ostensibly about the humanitarian assistance to my country, and after turning its back it is resorting to sinister attempts to lay obstacles to the provision of humanitarian assistance by other countries and governmental and non-governmental international organizations by saying that the assistance was diverted in full for the use of the military and that there would be good farming this year.

In 1984, when South Korea was afflicted by floods the Democratic People's Republic of Korea generously provided a large quantity of cooperation in a noble humanitarian and compatriotic spirit. As long as South Korea attempts to use the issue of humanitarian cooperation for its unjust political purpose, we have no intention of receiving any cooperation as such. We urge the South Korean authorities to immediately discontinue abusing the issue of humanitarian cooperation to pursue their political purposes to stifle and isolate our Republic.

As for the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula, the South Korean authorities — who have introduced foreign nuclear weapons into the country to destroy our nation — have not any qualification whatsoever to comment on it. To repeat, the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula is a bilateral one to be settled only between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States. The South Korean authorities should just sit down and enjoy watching the process rather than behaving ridiculously on the nuclear issue. We sincerely wish the South Korean authorities would behave with a spirit of national independence, cease to depend upon foreign forces at the earliest possible date, and discontinue abusing the sacred forum of the United Nations for North-South confrontation.

Mr. Gorelik (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): Speaking at this morning's plenary meeting, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova, Mr. Nicolae Tabakaru, stated that there continued to be an illegitimate deployment of contingents of the Russian Federation on the territory of his country, and that this contradicted the principle of international law that foreign troops could not be deployed on the territory of a State without its agreement. In this connection, our delegation is authorized to respond as follows.

That statement is in contradiction with the agreement of the Presidents of Russia and Moldova which was reached during recent meetings in September in Moscow, whose essence is that the number of Russian troops in Transdnister are constantly being reduced. However, the final withdrawal of these troops without a political settlement of the problem of Transdnister could lead to uncontrolled development of the situation, especially since there are major arsenals in that region.

As is well known, the Russian Federation is taking an active part in promoting the earliest possible settlement in Transdnister. This role of our country was noted by the head of the Moldovan delegation in his statement today.

It is our view that the problem should be settled on the basis of defining a special status for the Transdnister region while preserving the territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova. This principle was in fact reflected in the memorandum signed on 8 May this year in Moscow on the principles of normalizing relations between the Republic of Moldova and Transdnister.

The process of restoring normal life and dialogue between the parties is not developing as simply as one would wish. A great deal of painstaking work is continuing, with the involvement of the Russian side, which is encountering certain complications and emotional features. These can be overcome only by means of determined and peaceful efforts.

In the framework of the close bilateral relations between Kishinev and Moscow, the President and the Government of the Republic of Moldova show a clear understanding of this reality. However, in his statement the head of the delegation of the Republic of Moldova gave a different interpretation to the situation. This raises some questions, bearing in mind the fact that only a few days ago the deputy Chairman of the Russian Government, Mr. Serov, visited Moldova and talked with the leadership of the Republic of Moldova and the leaders of Transdnister. During those negotiations, the Russian side did not hear anything similar to what we heard today from this rostrum.

In conclusion, I would like to say that we are convinced that the process of a settlement in Transdnister is possible, but for this it is important to retain its constructive dynamics. From the Russian side, everything is being done so that this process can prevail.

Mr. Lim (Republic of Korea): It is regrettable, though not entirely surprising, that our North Korean colleague has presented another typically unproductive statement against the Republic of Korea. Although he referred to several issues, I wish to speak mainly about the human rights question for the sake of his own enlightenment and for the information of other delegations, as my Foreign Minister explained in full detail our position on the other issues this morning.

First and foremost, I would like to ask my North Korean colleague if he truly believes North Korea is in any position to call into question human rights anywhere in the world. The concept of human rights is complex and multidimensional, and therefore any debate on this issue tends to be contentious and inconclusive. On the other hand, however, discussing North Korea's human rights situation is simple.

Politically, it is a well known fact that North Korea has been sustained by a totalitarian system which has now taken the shape of the world's first communist dynasty. Is this a system which encourages, or even allows, political participation by its citizens? I seriously doubt it.

Economically, I am equally sceptical that the basic human needs of ordinary North Koreans are being met by their leadership — a leadership which claims it has created a workers' paradise. I wonder how it reconciles this concept of paradise with North Korea's current economic situation?

Socially, North Koreans live in the grip of unimaginable control and subjugation. Indeed, the fundamental freedoms of movement, speech and assembly are totally alien to the people of North Korea.

On the international front, North Korea has shown how woefully out of step it is with the rest of the world by announcing its intention to withdraw from the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in response to a resolution concerning the human rights situation in North Korea adopted at this year's session of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities.

If anything remains unclear about the human rights situation in North Korea it is always possible to refer to Amnesty International's reports, which contain vivid information about, among other things, the large-scale concentration camps for political prisoners throughout North Korea.

All in all, I believe that the description of North Korea in a survey of The Freedom House as

"the worst among the most repressive States"

provides a quick summary of the human rights situation in North Korea.

The North Korean representative also spoke at length about our national security law. What he failed to mention, however, was why that law was enacted. To put it bluntly, we needed such a law because North Korea continues to dispatch armed agents to the Republic of Korea, as evidenced by the North Korean submarine infiltration incident last September. In fact, North Korea's Communist Party Charter still stipulates the reunification of the two sides of Korea under communist rule as a primary objective.

Against that backdrop, my delegation considers it nothing short of preposterous for the North Korean delegation to question the human rights situation of another State.

If North Korea still insists on discussing human rights it should first of all open its own hermetically sealed society to the world, especially to human rights organizations, so that we can all see exactly what is going on inside its borders.

In the absence of any objective information or corroborative evidence to the contrary, North Korea's baseless assertions will continue to ring as hollow as before.

Mr. Choe Myong Nam (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I do not feel there is any need to refute categorically the intervention of the South Korean representative, which was again characterized by political illiteracy and went against human nature.

As all delegations have just witnessed, the South Korean authorities are still inciting confrontation between the north and the south of Korea, even at this sacred forum of the United Nations.

For the sake of increasing the understanding of the distinguished representatives, let me briefly refer to one stark reality. In recent years, the Governments of various countries, international organizations and other relevant organizations — irrespective of their differences in social systems, political views and religious beliefs — have been providing generous humanitarian assistance to my country, which has been suffering from a series of natural disasters. We are very grateful to all of these Governments and organizations for their sincere assistance.

However, the South Korean authorities are attempting to destroy the international atmosphere for humanitarian assistance by bringing into the United States people who committed crimes in my country and defected to South Korea some years ago out of fear of prosecution. And the South Korean authorities have organized a press conference to take place during the current General Assembly session. They are even saying that this humanitarian assistance should not be provided to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has stocks of extra food. Under such circumstances how can we communicate with the South Korean authorities, who are devoid of humanity, rather than sharing our nationality?

These attempts are anti-national and anti-ethical and certainly deserve condemnation from the international community. This shows the reality of North and South

Korean relations, which the South Korean authorities often clamour about.

Mr. Lim (Republic of Korea): I am once again rather disappointed that the North Korean delegation has either failed to understand, or pretended to ignore, how they are actually perceived by the international community. This time, however, our response will be short, as we don't wish to involve other delegations in a discussion the outcome of which may be easily predicted by everyone in this Hall — except, probably, one delegation.

Just for reference, I would just like to inform other delegations in this Hall that as the single largest donor, the Republic of Korea has provided North Korea with \$280 million of food and financial aid since 1995.

The President: The Observer of Palestine has asked to make a statement in reply. I give him the floor in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 3237 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974 and 43/177 of 15 December 1988.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*interpretation from Arabic*):

(*spoke in English*)

Let me first say that I believe that the arrangements by the Secretariat for this segment of our meeting are not consistent with established practice. This is something, however, which we will discuss later with the Secretariat — under your auspices, Sir, I hope.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

Here in this Hall today the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel discussed the situation. I am surprised at his extraordinary ability to give an opposite view of what is going on in the field.

The peace process in the Middle East is experiencing a real crisis that — as a result of the current Israeli Government's policies and practices — might bring the process to an end. Since its inception that Government has adopted general guidelines that run counter to the agreements between the Palestinian and Israeli sides. That Government has also continued settlement practices: confiscating land, bringing in more settlers and confiscating more Palestinian natural resources. It has also expressed its views through its

Prime Minister on developing future settlements which include the taking over of about half of the Palestinian territory that has been occupied since 1967. These views also include exclusive Jewish ownership of Al-Quds (Jerusalem) — including its Arab part which is under occupation.

These new policies have been accompanied by the escalation of repression of the Palestinian people: the imposition of a blockade on our economy, the prevention of movement of persons and goods, the destruction of homes and the confiscation of the identity cards of Palestinian residents of Jerusalem. The Israeli Government has violated everything: international law, relevant Security Council resolutions, resolutions of the tenth special session of the General Assembly, the agreements reached between the two parties and, finally, the very bases of the peace process.

The Israeli Minister for Foreign Affairs talked about terrorism. Our position is quite clear: we condemn terrorism. We have opposed it, and we believe terrorism should continue to be condemned, irrespective of its sources. We must condemn terrorist acts committed by extremists on both sides, regardless of its size on the two sides or the losses resulting from them. Final elimination of violence and terrorism will not be accomplished except by upholding the peace process and achieving the requisite progress politically and economically. It will be accomplished by creating a different environment, one that corresponds with mutual recognition, respect for the rights of the parties, instead of expansionist policies, arrogance and policies of repression.

The Minister warned against the United Nations dealing with the issue. This is ironic. He himself referred to General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 1947, which constitutes the legal basis for the existence of Israel. Since then the United Nations has a permanent responsibility for the Palestinian question, until it is solved. This responsibility cannot end by the mere beginning of the peace process.

International law, including the resolutions of the Security Council, is valid and cannot be replaced or reduced in importance by any transitional agreements. The fiftieth anniversary of Israel is a strong reminder of the anniversary of the tragedy of the Palestinian people, who are awaiting the fulfilment of the other part of resolution 181, the establishment of the Arab State. This, God willing, will take place soon, thanks to our struggle and thanks to the support of the international community, which is based on justice and the desire to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Today we heard about some positive developments in Palestinian-Israeli bilateral relations. We hope that these will lead to the creation of a new reality that will supplant statements such as those made today and that will be in harmony with the bases of the peace process in the Middle East and the agreements that have been reached between the two parties.

The President: There are no further speakers for this afternoon's meeting.

The meeting rose at 6.50 p.m.